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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

Second periodic report of States parties

Lebanon*

*The present report is being issued without formal editing.

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Preface

This report, which is the second periodic report of Lebanon, is submitted in accordance with article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It presents general and detailed information on the outcome of legislative and statutory amendments which have been introduced and on the developments which have occurred in society, in particular through the work of governmental and non-governmental organizations, in order to establish a structure that promotes the achievement of equality between women and men.

This report describes both the changing and constant features and conditions of the status of Lebanese women in the five years intervening between the date of completion of the initial report submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the present date, at which time the second periodic report is being prepared, in the areas covered by the Convention: legislation, administration, politics, education, health, employment and the cultural setting which underlies each and every one of these areas.

This report is in two parts:

- Part one outlines the geographical and human aspects of the Republic of Lebanon and gives an analytical description of the political, legislative and institutional systems on which it is based, the aim being to provide a picture of the overall environment that encompasses women and plays a part in their circumstances. This has been done in the context of responding explicitly or implicitly to the letter and spirit of the Convention.

- Part two enters into the articles of the Convention in detail and covers them in specific chapters which generally follow the order of the Convention, although article 14 is dealt with in various chapters of the report, as necessary.

This report was prepared by the National Commission for Lebanese Women; a committee of its members compiled part one and supervised the completion of part two, which was entrusted to a group of experts, both female and male, specializing in a variety of fields.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women extends its gratitude to those who assisted in the preparation of the second periodic report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

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Part One
Social, political and legal environment

Chapter 1
General facts

I. Geography

Boundaries: Lebanon has a total area of 10,452 square kilometres. It is bordered by the Syrian Arab Republic on the north and east and by Palestine on the south and faces the Mediterranean in the west.

Position: Situated in the south-west of the Asian continent, Lebanon occupies a unique geographical position, with its territory overlooking the eastern basin of the Mediterranean in the temperate northern region. Lebanon has long been known for the distinctive location of its mountains, which reach heights of up to 3,088 metres. It is regarded as a centre of influence in trade and cultural development and is a cultural mix of East and West, going by the name of the gateway from West to East.

In addition to its impact on the country's political circumstances throughout the different periods of history, Lebanon's geographical position has greatly affected the formation of its natural resources and its economic systems.

A large area of southern Lebanon has been under Israeli occupation since 1978. The so-called border strip was successfully liberated at the end of May 2000, with the exception of the Shab'a farmlands, which are still under Israeli occupation. Male and female prisoners were consequently freed from the Khiyam detention centre, a site now visited by groups from all over the world who come and learn of the oppression and tyranny of Israel. Notwithstanding the increase in emigration abroad as a result of the civil war and its disastrous economic consequences, most of the internally displaced have returned home, as the reasons which drove them elsewhere against their will no longer obtain.

The capital: The capital of Lebanon is Beirut, which is inhabited by approximately 1.5 million persons. It lies on a rocky promontory midway along the coast and is Lebanon's main communication hub.

Climate: The climate in Lebanon is regarded as one of the best on earth; with its four distinct seasons and only moderate cold and heat, it is pleasant and healthy. The country is divided into three main climatic zones: coastal, mountain and internal.

II. Demography

Number of inhabitants: In 1997, the number of inhabitants residing in Lebanon was estimated to amount to approximately four million.

Population growth: Between 1996 and 2001, the annual population growth was estimated at 1.3 per cent, compared with an estimated 2.5 per cent in 1970.

With a high population density, Lebanon is overpopulated, which, in addition to other economic, political and psychological factors, may have played a part in the decision of some Lebanese to emigrate in search of a livelihood.

Average life expectancy: In 2001, the average life expectancy was 72.6 years, over seven years higher than in 1970. In 2002, life expectancy at birth was 72 years for females and 67.6 years for males.

Fertility: In 2000, the average number of live births among married or previously married women was 3.16.

Infant mortality: Statistics for 2000 indicate that 52 per cent of infant deaths occurred within the first week of birth and 77 per cent within the first month. Statistics for 2002 also give breakdown figures for infant mortality at 29 females and 35 males per 1,000 infants, illustrating the importance of maternal and child health at the perinatal stage.

Deaths: In 1996, the overall death rate fell from 9 to 7.4 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants. The fall is expected to continue down to 6 deaths per 1,000 by 2021.

Statistics for 2002 give breakdown figures for adult deaths per 1,000 persons at 129 females and 201 males.

It should be pointed out that Lebanese indicators vary according to governorate and also according to area within each governorate.

Employment: Statistics show an increase in the rate of women's participation in the labour market to 25 per cent among women of working age in 2001.

Divorce and desertion: The rate of divorce is at its highest among the age groups of 35 to 39 and 40 to 44, after which it begins to fall, as shown in the following table:

Table 1
Breakdown of females (15-54 years) by marital status and age (per 1,000)

	Marital status				
Age group	*Unmarried*	*Married*	*Widowed*	*Divorced or deserted*	*Total*
15-19	943	55	0	2	1,000
20-24	727	266	1	6	1,000
25-29	463	518	7	12	1,000
30-34	308	659	14	19	1,000
35-39	203	746	29	22	1,000
40-44	154	783	31	32	1,000
45-49	139	783	63	15	1,000
50-54	58	783	148	11	1,000

Source: Central Administration for Statistics/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The situation of children in Lebanon, 2000.

III. Family

1. Marriage: The family is closely linked to the creeds, religions, traditions, history and customs of the nation. A total of 18 religious communities and schools coexist on Lebanese soil, constituting a key term of reference for all inhabitants in matters of personal status. Most of these communities share the view of marriage as a public contract of a religious nature in which a man and a woman mutually consent to make a life together. The Christian communities believe that the bond of

marriage is sacred. All religious communities have certain conditions that must be fulfilled before a marriage can be contracted. In short, these relate to consent, legal competence, guardianship, lack of impediment and form.

Statistics for 2000 indicate that intermarriage is in decline, showing as they do that one in every four women is married to a relative. The rate of intermarriage varies markedly by governorate; it is at its lowest in Beirut (15 per cent), followed by Mount Lebanon (20 per cent), and reaches its highest in rural areas. The following table 2 shows the link between the marriage rate and a woman's educational level.

Table 2
Breakdown of previously married females by age group and educational level (per cent)

	Educational level			
Age group	*Illiterate*	*Primary and intermediate*	*Secondary and above*	*Total*
15-19	-	76.7	23.3	100
20-24	0.9	32	67.1	100
25-29	4.2	52.4	43.3	100
30-34	4.6	48.2	47.2	100
35-39	6.1	51.6	42.3	100
40-44	9.4	57.5	33.1	100
45-49	17.9	52.6	29.5	100
Total	**7.1**	**53.8**	**39.1**	**100**

Source: Central Administration for Statistics/UNICEF, The situation of children in Lebanon, 2000.

The information contained in this table strikingly illustrates that the marriage rate among women educated to primary or intermediate level is high in virtually all age groups and lower among illiterate women. Among educated to secondary level or above, it is lower in all age groups.

2. *Social education*: The process of social education continues to be one of the most important functions of the family and involves such essential factors as managing and guiding the behaviour and actions of children, helping to resolve their problems and providing them with an education.

Men's participation in this process differs from that of women as a function of numerous social and technological changes. It also differs as a function of the social circumstances of each family. In Lebanese society, however, the job of caring for the family is generally considered to be the fundamental responsibility of women; the husband is regarded only as a helper in that process.

3. *Family planning*: Women display an interest in eradicating the various traditions and customs that reject the principle of family planning in practice. Such interest is attributable to the desire to maintain a comfortable standard of living and to the impact of education in that all the accompanying functional and social ideas and trends are taken on board. In rural areas, there is generally less interest in the subject than in urban areas, although statistical studies carried out in a number of rural areas show that use of family planning methods is increasing; the proportion stood at 60 per cent in 2002 and at 64 per cent in 2003. Statistical data also indicate

an overall fall in the average number of Lebanese family members from 5.3 in 1970 to 4.8 in 1997 and 4.6 in 2001. This average varies by region. Beiruti families are the smallest, with an average of 3.9 members, whereas the average is 5.1 in northern Lebanon and 6.2 in the liberated border areas. The higher number in the latter case is due to the fact that the areas in question are mostly rural.

4. *Family leadership*: The responsibility for securing the family's economic and social needs falls to the member with the leading role. In principle, the authority to give orders, impose bans and provide guidance lies with the person who is the most productive and brings in the most cash. Traditionally, therefore, it is the husband who holds the power and influence in his household. Today, however, women now share the husband's responsibility for managing the affairs of the household and resolving its problems. By and large, studies show that a woman's leadership role has increased and expanded; she is more involved in running her family's affairs, her opinion is more often sought, her position and status within the family are higher and she has now come to be regarded as a productive human being and a creative force. The phenomenon of so-called joint leadership has also begun to emerge. Widowhood and male emigration may also play a part in encouraging such leadership, since widows now account for 82 per cent of women heads of household.

Although in rural areas it is predominantly the men who give orders and make the final decisions, rural women contribute substantially to agricultural production. If a husband dies, the woman frequently steps into his shoes and assumes full responsibility for the family, thus promoting her status. Statistics show that, in certain rural areas, 33 per cent of women heads of household are employed in agriculture. The proportion of women heads of household in rural areas rose overall from 6.5 to 10.9 per cent between 1970 and 1987.

5. *Education*: Lebanese society is increasingly persuaded of the importance of women's education and higher proportions of women are admitted to general, university and higher education than to vocational and technical education; in 2003/04, the proportion of females registered in vocational and technical education stood at 41.3 per cent of total students, whereas the proportion registered in higher education stood at 49.6 per cent. Education represents not only social advancement for women; they now also believe that it provides them with the opportunity to acquire a worthwhile economic function. It should be said that their specialization choices at university and in further education are sometimes made without any relation to the needs of the job market, the effect of which is to increase the unemployment rate among women.

Despite the shift in thinking about female education, the majority of studies give indicators for those without the opportunity of education that reveal clear differences between the sexes; in the liberated border areas, the proportion of females who have never attended school stands at 15 per cent, where as among males it is 7 per cent, indicating that rural families are not yet finally free of the traditional attitude towards female education. Today's rural women have managed to improve their educational situation, thus promoting further opportunities for their education and training, although still only on a partial scale.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that Lebanon has completed the work of drafting a strategy entitled "Strategic guidelines for education in Lebanon for 2015". This strategy seeks to achieve a number of core guidelines, including those relating to compulsory education, literacy, measures to prevent school drop-out, etc.

IV. Political system

Lebanon is a fully sovereign independent State and is indivisibly unified within its borders, as provided for in the Constitution and as internationally recognized.

Lebanon is a democratic parliamentary republic in which the people are the source of authority; it is they who directly elect the representatives of the legislative branch - or, in other words, the deputies - and who choose the President of the Republic. The Constitution also enshrines the principle that all Lebanese are equal before the law and emphasizes that personal liberty, individual ownership and all public freedoms must be safeguarded.

The shape of the political system becomes clear in the following explanation of the branches of government and local councils.

1. Branches of government

(a) The legislative branch: The National Assembly assumes responsibility for the legislative branch. In today's Lebanese parliament, there are 128 deputies who belong in equal number to the Islamic and Christian religious communities. They are elected by secret ballot for a four-year term.

Although the number of women candidates in the parliamentary elections held in 2000 and the opportunities available for women to enter the National Assembly indicate that women play a part in political power, they have achieved only extremely modest results in this area; only three women entered the parliamentary group of 128 deputies, a situation which demands that greater efforts be made to develop the social environment and alter the traditional way of thinking in order to ensure more effective participation by women in the legislative process.

(b) The executive branch: The executive branch is represented by the President of the Republic and by the Cabinet, which is responsible for drafting and implementing the general policy of the State in all matters.

The presidency: The presidency has undergone a number of historic developments and the Lebanese Constitution enshrines the principle of the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, as well as the division of political posts among the religious communities.

Following the end of the Lebanese war in 1990, agreement was reached concerning the Charter of National Reconciliation, which incorporates a succession of powers, some of which have been applied and some of which are awaiting application. The powers of the President of the Republic, the president of the Cabinet and the president of the National Assembly were also redefined in accordance with the articles mentioned in the Constitution.

No woman has yet held office as President of the Republic or as president of the National Assembly or the Cabinet.

The Cabinet: There is no legal obstacle preventing the participation of women in political life. It is worth pointing out that, since independence, no woman had ever held any ministerial office that strengthened her status and her contribution to political work until 26 October 2004, the date on which the newest ministry was established and on which a woman assumed the portfolio of minister of State. Another woman also assumed the portfolio of the Ministry of Industry, which is

regarded as a positive sign in the right direction for the equality of women with men.

(c) The judicial branch: The judicial branch oversees all courts, whatever their degree and jurisdiction, as prescribed by law. Decisions and rulings are given by all courts and are implemented in the name of the Lebanese people.

Judges are independent in the exercise of their function and judicial office may not be combined with public office.

In Lebanon, the judiciary essentially comprises courts of justice and administrative courts.

Courts of justice: The courts of justice comprise the courts of first instance, the courts of appeal and the Court of Cassation.

The Court of Cassation is the only such court throughout Lebanon and sits in Beirut. Its jurisdiction includes the examination of applications for the reversal of final judgements handed down by the appeal courts and all other applications that it is appointed to consider by law.

It also examines applications for the transferral of cases from one court to another, as well as applications for an authoritative decision in the event of a positive or negative difference occurring between two courts.

Administrative courts: The administrative courts in Lebanon oversee the Consultative Council of State, a judicial body that is independent of the administrative judiciary. Although among the organizations of the Ministry of Justice, they are fully independent in the performance of their functions.

They are empowered to invalidate any administrative action taken by any executive organ (the Cabinet, ministers, governors, district presidents, municipalities and public institutions) where such action is contrary to law, an abuse of power, a misrepresentation of authority or a violation of any rule or general legal principle.

The Consultative Council is the appropriate authority for the settlement of municipal and voluntary elections.

In addition to the justice and administrative courts, Lebanon also has financial and military courts.

Pursuant to the Constitutional Act promulgated on 21 September 1990, a constitutional council was created. Act No. 250 of 14 July 1993 prescribes the rules for its organization, the principles of its work and how it is to be constituted and consulted.

The Constitutional Council is responsible for the constitutional monitoring of laws and settles disputes and challenges arising out of presidential and parliamentary elections.

The President of the Republic, the president of the National Assembly, the president of the Cabinet or a 10-member group of the National Assembly are each entitled to consult the Council in connection with the constitutional monitoring of laws. The leaders of legally recognized religious communities are also entitled to consult the Council, although only in connection with matters of personal status.

freedom of belief, the practice of religious ceremonies and freedom of religious education.

It should be noted that the rate of women's participation in the judicial branch of government will be covered in part two of this report.

2. Local councils

Municipal councils: The territory of Lebanon is divided into governorates and districts. The former are headed by a governor and the latter by a district president. In towns and villages with municipal councils, the central authority is represented by the leader of the municipality, who also represents the people of the municipality and looks after their interests.

Pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 5 of 3 February 1930, the administrative districts were reorganized with the establishment of five major regions, which were later increased to six pursuant to Decree No. 253 of 24 February 1983. These are the governorates of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, the Beqaa, South Lebanon and Nabatiyah.

On 1 July 2003, the Lebanese National Assembly approved the establishment of two new governorates in Lebanon in order to promote administrative decentralization, whereupon the number of governorates in Lebanon increased to eight. The two new governorates are those of Baalbek al-Harmal and Akkar. The implementation of this decision, however, has not yet been fully structured.

Each governorate consists of districts, with the exception of the governorate of Beirut, which is confined exclusively to the city of Beirut. Each district comprises populated areas, some of them towns and some of them villages, most of which have their own municipalities. Various changes were made to this arrangement pursuant to Decree No. 116 of 12 June 1959.

The municipal machinery is made up of a reporting branch and an executive branch. In 2004, one of the 25 seats in the municipal council elections in the governorate of Beirut was won by a woman, a proportion that is deemed inadequate as far as achieving the desired results for effective participation in political and public life is concerned. It should be stated that no women were named among the most recent appointments to the office of governor, whereas a women was appointed to the office of district president 15 years ago and another woman was appointed as one of 20 district presidents in 2003.

Voluntary councils: Anywhere that has more than 50 inhabitants is eligible to be run by a mayor, with the assistance of a two-member voluntary council. The number of such council members increases in proportion to the number of residents. Villages with fewer than 50 inhabitants are run by a mayor, in conjunction with the nearest village council. Unlike the leader of the municipality, the mayor is not elected by the voluntary council. Instead, he is elected directly, along with the members, by the same methods which apply to municipal council elections. He presides over the voluntary council and represents the village or neighbourhood in consulting the authorities for the benefit the inhabitants. He represents the administration in matters of a purely administrative nature.

With the exception of fees received by the mayor for certain business transactions, his functions are honorary, as are those of the voluntary council members. Nevertheless, both the mayor and the voluntary council members are

continually monitored by the central authority of the State through the governors and district presidents who are its representatives. In the outcome of the elections held in 2004 in the governorate of Beirut, women won only two of 108 voluntary council seats, thereby demonstrating their failure to accomplish the required success in this respect.

It should be said that women have not achieved equal opportunities with men in representing their Government at the international level, meaning that political, domestic, regional and international decisions remain in the hands of men.

There is no doubt that elimination of the obstacles in the way of women calls for tireless work on their part to highlight their competence, experience and capabilities with a view to strengthening their role in political leadership, promoting their wider involvement in political parties and trade unions and freeing the political system from denominational restrictions. At the same time, the Government should introduce measures and programmes designed to provide them with further incentive and stimulate their successful and effective participation.

Chapter 2
General legal framework for the protection of human rights

(Article 2 of the Convention)

There are three essential mainstays for the protection of human rights:

- Constitutional provisions and constitutional monitoring of laws;
- International provisions and their precedence over domestic laws;
- Legal monitoring of administrative activities.

I. Constitutional provisions and constitutional monitoring of laws

The Lebanese Constitution introduces its provisions with a preamble, which was added to the basic text in 1990, followed, in chapter one, by a first section entitled "The State and its territories" and a second section entitled "The Lebanese, their rights and their obligations".

Under this second title, article 7 of the Constitution affirms that: "All Lebanese are equal before the law. They shall enjoy equal civil and political rights and be equally bound by public obligations and duties, without distinction among them." Article 12 adds that: "Every Lebanese shall have the right to hold public office, with no advantage to one person over another, except on the basis of merit and aptitude in accordance with the conditions stipulated by law."

The Lebanese Constitution thus recognizes the full equality of all citizens before the law, although it makes no specific or explicit provision for the equality of men and women. Such equality, however, is one of the constitutional principles by which the legislator is bound (Decision No. 1/2000 of the Lebanese Constitutional Council, dated 1 February 2000). In addition, the content of the preamble to the Constitution has equal constitutional value with the positive provisions explicitly enshrined within the Constitution itself.

The preamble to the Constitution states that Lebanon is "a founding and active member of the Organization of the United Nations and is bound by its instruments

and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The State shall embody these principles in all fields and areas, without exception."

Since its first decisions in connection with the constitutional monitoring of laws, the Lebanese Constitutional Council has made persistent reference to the preamble to the Constitution (Decision No. 3/95 of 18 September 1995, Decision No. 4/96 of 7 August 1996 and Decision Nos. 1 and 2 of 12 September 1997) and to general constitutional principles (Decision No. 2/95 of 25 February 1995), thus paving the way for the endeavour consolidated by the last five years and on which basis the preamble to the Constitution is regarded as "an integral part thereof" and as having "a constitutional value equal to the provisions of the Constitution" (Decision No. 2/1999 of 24 November 1999 and Decision No. 2/2001 of 10 May 2001). Put more comprehensively, the Lebanese Constitutional Council affirms that "to the extent that the Charter of National Reconciliation incorporates provisions contained in the preamble or body of the Constitution or general principles of constitutional value, the contravention of those provisions and principles is subject to monitoring by the Constitutional Council" (Decision No. 2/1 of 31 January 2001 and Decision No. 2/2002 of 3 July 2002.)

In addition, "the international instruments explicitly included in the preamble to the Constitution, together with this preamble, form ... an integral part [thereof] and enjoy the same constitutional force." (Decision No. 2/2001 of the Lebanese Constitutional Council, dated 10 May 2001.) Furthermore, the Charter of the United Nations and similarly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both of which became an integral part of the preamble to the Constitution, emphasize the right to enjoyment of all rights and freedoms, without any discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language or religion ... without any distinction between men and women.

On that basis, we may finally emphasize that, in Lebanon, equality between men and women is a general principle of constitutional value. Consequently, any new legislative provision which fails to observe such equality is likely to be declared null and void by the Constitutional Council.

With reference to the decisions of the Constitutional Council, they enjoy the same force as a court ruling and are binding on all public, judicial and administrative authorities.

II. International provisions and their precedence over domestic laws

In addition to its commitment to the instruments of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lebanon is bound by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

At this juncture, we would point out that the States Parties to the two above-mentioned Covenants undertake to ensure the rights recognized in both, without distinction of any kind, such as race ... (article 2 of the first Covenant and article 2 of the second Covenant). The States Parties also undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the first Covenant (article 3 of the Covenant) and all civil and political rights set forth in the second Covenant (article 3 of the Covenant).

In addition to the above, Lebanon is further bound under more than one international convention (several of which are mentioned in the initial report) to prevent discrimination between men and women in more than one area. However, the main point still is that, in Lebanon, international conventions take precedence over domestic law by virtue of an explicit provision, as follows: "Where the provisions of international treaties conflict with the provisions of ordinary law, the first shall take precedence over the second in the field of application." (Article 2, paragraph 2, of the Code of Civil Procedure.)

In that regard, it should be mentioned that the International Labour Organization Convention No. 111, which prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation, played a decisive role in the adoption by the Lebanese judiciary of an independent judgement that men and women insured under social security are equal and that the insured women is entitled to social security benefits for her children if they receive nothing from any other source. This independent judgement continued to stand until 2000, when the legislator stepped in to make an explicit amendment in the same vein to article 14 of the Social Security Act.

Harmonization of the provisions of domestic law with the international conventions to which Lebanon has acceded is now a constant factor in the process of updating Lebanese laws. (In July 2004, the Minister of Labour referred to the General Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Cabinet a proposed law for amendment of the Employment Act with the aim of laying the foundation for the elimination of discrimination between men and women and for compliance with the Arab and international conventions to which Lebanon has acceded. Prior to that, on 30 January 2004, a decree to regulate occupational protection, safety and health in institutions subject to the Employment Act was promulgated. Its provisions are in harmony with the international labour conventions on the subject to which Lebanon has acceded.)

III. Legal monitoring of administrative action

In Lebanon, the courts may not declare any action of the legislature invalid owing to the failure to apply ordinary laws to the Constitution or international conventions (article 2, paragraph 3, of the Code of Civil Procedure). Any administrative action, taken contrary to any law, regulation or court ruling, however, is null and void (article 108 of the Act comprising the statute of the State Consultative Council).

Contravention of the law is a major failing that bodes ill for administrative decisions and is thus a key reason for their eventual invalidation.

Contravention of the law is a failing that is not confined to the contravention of explicit legislative or regulatory provisions; it also includes all sources which give rise to legal rules, primarily the Constitution and international conventions. The decision of the Lebanese State Constitutional Council states that it is for the Council, which is the "supreme constitutional court, to carry out constitutional monitoring of administrative action where such action directly contravenes the Constitution." (Decision No. 522 of 8 May 1996).

Accordingly, any action which comprises a breach of any rule or general legal principle, such as that of equality, for example, and the entitlement to enjoy rights and freedoms, without discrimination of any kind, is likely to be invalidated before the State Consultative Council.

Although involving the protection of fundamental rights by law, the above is still not a requirement as long as the Constitution makes no explicit provision for non-discrimination on grounds of sex.

Chapter 3
Bodies working in the official and non-governmental sectors

1. Bodies working in the official sector

Women's affairs and issues are officially looked after by four official bodies.

1. The National Commission for Lebanese Women. The National Commission for Lebanese Women was established in 1998 in accordance with the outcomes of the Beijing Conference. Ranked as the leading official body for women, it has the task of consolidating the broadest view of women's affairs and shaping it into strategies, action plans and recommendations. It also has the task of coordination and linkage with official departments and non-governmental organizations, as well as that of representation at home and abroad, thus universally confirming the official message of the Lebanese State in regard to women's affairs.

In the period intervening between the initial report submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women and the present report (2000 to 2004), two configurations of the Commission have been established. The National Commission for Lebanese Women has contributed to implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through a variety of activities projects, the most important of which are mentioned below.

The Commission participated in the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Administration and Justice with a view to submitting proposals for a bill relating to the Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime. It also recently participated in the meeting of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Administration and Justice assigned to study the proposed law aimed at amending the Penal Code.

In the context of the long-term strategy to alter the traditional attitudes embodying social and cultural stereotyping of the behaviour of men and women, the Commission highlighted distinguished and publicly active women figures by honouring female scholars, social pioneers, media personalities and students at events and ceremonies dedicated to Lebanese or Arab women, mothers and so on.

The Commission participated in conferences of Arab women and hosted the Forum on Arab Women and Armed Conflict, the general watchwords and recommendations of which focused on the importance of the role of women in disseminating the culture of peace and justice. The Commission also participated in the founding activities of the Arab Women's Organization, a dedicated governmental organization established within the framework of the League of Arab States under an agreement to which Lebanon acceded on 12 December 2002 and which entered into force on 1 March 2003. The aims of this Organization include the promotion of joint cooperation and information exchange in connection with the advancement of women and the prioritization of women's issues in comprehensive development plans and policies.

The Lebanese Women's Information Centre was also launched in order to record everything relating to Lebanese women in a variety of documentary archives, whether paper, audio, visual or electronic. Work is presently under way on setting up a website for the Centre.

Having devoted special attention to raising health awareness, the Commission set about holding a series of lectures and symposia at its own centre on subjects relating to reproductive health and nutrition. It organized a workshop on maternal safety and the health of the newborn child as part of the third Conference on Perinatal Medicine for the Developing Countries and also sponsored a Francophone summit conference on prenatal medicine, held in Lebanon in 2001.

In the context of legal literacy and the Employment Act, the Commission prepared, implemented and evaluated an 11-month project designed to provide legal advice to working women, in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF, in the development service centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs throughout all regions. The project was regarded as a model project by the directors of the centres concerned.

As part of the economic empowerment of women, in September 2004, the Commission organized a workshop, attended by 47 women's associations, on small loans and the marketing of craft products. Lectures were given by experts on the subject and people working in the two fields exchanged their accumulation of expertise.

2. *The Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children*: Formed at the end of 2000, this Committee comprises 12 deputies, including three women deputies from the National Assembly, and is chaired by the deputy Naylah Mu'awwad.

The Committee operates in accordance with the mechanism governing the work of parliamentary committees on legislation; proposals and bills relating to women (and also children) are referred to it for consideration in the light of proposals made by the concerned civil and government bodies, in addition to which their consistency with international conventions is examined. Its proposals are then submitted to the relevant joint committee panel for consideration (in cases where the bill or proposal is referred to more than one committee) before they are submitted to the general body of the Assembly in final form.

Since its establishment, the Committee has worked on more than one law, in particular:

- Act No. 343 of 6 August 2001, which provides for the equality of male and female civil servants in the rules on retirement and dismissal;

- Act No. 483/2002, which provides for the amendment of article 14 of the Social Security Act.

3. *The Office of Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs*: This is an office in the Ministry's Department of Family Affairs. Its functions are, *inter alia*, to formulate and institute programmes aimed at responding to women's needs and at improving and strengthening their capacities, and to propose budgets earmarking the funds needed to implement such programmes in conjunction with other ministries and non-governmental organizations. The Office also oversees and follows up governmental and non-governmental activities relating to women and serves to coordinate between the Lebanese Government and international, Arab and home-

grown institutions. It further supports the efforts of the women's movement, collaborates in its activities and seeks to unite its efforts, in addition to which it monitors the implementation and follow-up of the United Nations conventions relating to women to which the Lebanese State has acceded.

Activities of the Office in the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: First and foremost, it must be said that women are the main beneficiaries of all the activities sponsored by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The various projects implemented by the Ministry in the development service centres located throughout Lebanon (projects relating to health services, reproductive health, literacy, health awareness-raising among adolescents, etc.) have been specifically tailored to women's needs.

In its efforts to combat violence against women and prevent the resistance shown in our society to acknowledging the existence of such violence, the Office, in conjunction with the concerned non-governmental organizations, is implementing a project to combat domestic violence against children, the elderly and women under the banner of "families without violence: a safe and sound society". The project comprises three phases: the first phase is designed to develop the capacities of those working in development service centres; the second phase is designed to heighten local-community awareness of domestic violence; and the third phase is designed to train workers in specialist intervention with women victims of violence. These same services are being expanded as part of a new project being implemented in centres run by non-governmental organizations involved in combating violence against women.

The Office is also implementing a pilot project for the legal empowerment of women. It aims to raise legal awareness (of labour laws, penalties, personal status and commerce) among various groups of women from the local communities in the vicinity of the development service centres. This project also offers free advice, a service which is set to expand. Together with non-governmental associations, the Office is to pursue the implementation of a joint project aimed at the legal empowerment of working women and the publication of a guide or booklet containing legal information.

An earlier project (pre-2000) for the economic empowerment of women in today's economic circumstances culminated with the Ministry's publication of a book entitled "Gender indicators for small-project programmes in Lebanon", which establishes a scientific basis for the formulation of development projects designed to advance the economic situation of women.

4. *The Economic and Social Council*: Promulgated in 1995, the law founding the Council brought together male and female representatives of the key economic, social and occupational sectors. The Council comprises key sectors that include "social institutions", among them women's federations, and its function is defined as "ensuring participation (by these sectors) in providing opinion and advice concerning the formulation of economic and social policies." It thus seeks to "improve dialogue, collaboration and cooperation" among these various sectors. Initially, the Cabinet refers requests for an opinion and for the preparation of studies and reports on economic, social and occupational matters to the Economic and Social Council, which is also entitled to state its views on a specific subject should it be considered necessary by one third of its members.

At the end of 1999, this Council, in its initial - and only - form, comprised 71 members from the sectors represented. Six of these members are women, two of whom were appointed to represent women's federations. One was elected to the bureau of the Council - the only woman to have stood for the seat - but the chairmanship of its eight committees remained a male monopoly. Five of the women have together been on the Committee for Human Development and Human Rights.

In addition to the functions which lay behind its foundation, the Council completed a study entitled "Handling the socio-economic crisis", which offers a consensual view of the methods for socio-economic advancement advocated by the sectors included in its make-up. The study listed maternal and child health as a top priority for the health policy to be adopted. It also advised that it was essential to promote the economic role of women and urge their effective involvement in the productive cycle.

On the basis of their described functions, the main bodies attach particular importance to coordinating with non-governmental society and civil society and to involving them in the formulation of their views and plans and in the implementation of their programmes. This coordination has been more tangible in situations where people work full-time in their appointed positions than in those where people work voluntarily.

II. Bodies working in the non-governmental sector

The Lebanese enjoy the freedom to establish associations without prior authorization from the State; anyone wishing to establish an association is simply required to so notify the Ministry of the Interior (the Ottoman Law on Associations of 1909). The following table contains data on the status of women in the purposes and activities of associations working in the Republic of Lebanon.

Table 1.
Numerical breakdown of organizations by aim and geographical location

	Non-governmental organizations with the fundamental aim of strengthening the status of women (under their statute)	*Non-governmental organizations targeting women (under their statute)*
Number	*61 (of 4,073)*	*101 (of 4,073)*
Organizations working in the capital and Mount Lebanon	45	75
Organizations working beyond the capital and Mount Lebanon	16	61

Source: Survey of non-governmental organizations in Lebanon, an unpublished study by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, Beirut, September 2002.

It should be mentioned that the above figures do not include organizations for which women are a low-priority target of their work. These organizations, however, are visibly concentrated in the most densely populated areas and not in the areas with the most need (rural and outlying areas, for example).

Four examples of these organizations are reviewed below, along with the activities through which they strive to disseminate the culture of equality and fight for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

1. Alliances

The Lebanese Women's Network: In 2002, the Lebanese Women's Network was launched as a pressure group for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The Network comprises 12 non-governmental organizations whose prime objective is to strengthen the status of women in society and eliminate discrimination against them. In the summer of 2003, this Network adopted a working document with the fundamental aims of fighting to achieve the full equality of women and men, eliminate the disparities between women and men in Lebanese society and create an enabling environment in which the productive and creative capacities of women and men can be unleashed and made to flourish. It has elaborated strategies and an action plan aimed at eradicating discrimination against women at all cultural, social, economic, legal and political levels.

In that context, the Lebanese Women's Network will seek to ensure that Lebanese legislation is brought into conformity with the international conventions ratified and acceded to by Lebanon, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It will also do its utmost to urge the competent Lebanese authorities to remove their reservations to the Convention. It will seek the amendment of laws that prejudice women's rights, as well as the introduction of laws conducive to the evolution of Lebanese society and a change in attitude.

The Network has developed a phased programme for the elimination of gender discrimination in the Penal Code, currently under review, with particular reference to the repeal of article 563 relating to honour crimes, in addition to heavier penalties for rape and the repeal of all articles relating to adultery. A committee of legal experts is monitoring the projects completed on the Penal Code by organizations in the non-governmental sector with a view to drafting proposed amendments to laws. The Network is currently engaged in preparing the campaign to be launched in conjunction with the main partners with which it is allied, such as the Beirut Lawyers' Union, Amnesty International, the Lebanese Women's Council, the National Focal Point for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Forum for Human Dignity in the Penal Code. The campaign of demands will be accompanied by an information campaign, for which preparations are also under way.

The National Focal Point for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: The National Focal Point for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was founded in March 1999 at the invitation of the Committee on Women's Rights, which is Lebanon's longest-standing organization in this field. The objective of the Focal Point is to step up and focus efforts on demanding the full legal equality of women and men from the concerned authorities. It comprises bodies, institutions, federations, unions and leagues involved in women's issues and civil-society affairs throughout Lebanon. By and large, its members are personalities in the economic, social and political arenas who have rallied to speed up removal of the prejudice to the rights of Lebanese women and application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The immediate aims of the Focal Point are to seek amendment of the Lebanese laws in effect in regard to penalties, civil servants, wage-earners, trade, employment, social security and taxation, and subsequently to ensure completion of

the process by working to eliminate any inconsistency between the written law and its application in practice. The Focal Point devotes substantial effort to disseminating the culture of women's rights and human rights in general through conferences, seminars, awareness-raising programmes and training.

The National Focal Point for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women comprises 62 associations that are actively involved in the field of human rights and women's rights. It effectively lobbies the Lebanese National Assembly, which is in constant communication with it through three of its committees, namely the Committee on Education, the Committee on Administration and Justice and the Committee on Women and Children. This cooperation has led to successful amendment of articles and provisions of the Employment Act and the Social Security Act. The Focal Point is presently working to eliminate discrimination from further provisions and articles of the Code of Commerce, the Penal Code, the Social Security Act and the Nationality Act.

The Lebanese Women's Council. The Council comprises over 140 women's associations and describes itself as the body that is more representative of women's groups than any other. Its activities, however, have been restricted by virtue of its diverse nature and the efforts of its successive leaderships to sustain its unity and prevent splits insofar as its member associations need to reach consensus on its movements, its stated positions and its potential alliances, while at the same time retaining their individual freedom in the areas concerned. As some of these associations are denominational and operate within the guidelines set by their religion, the area of joint activity remains narrow. Consequently, although it is an issue of a major concern to some of its member associations, removal of the reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is not on the Council's agenda.

Given the Council's broad representative base and as reflected in its programmes of recent years, its leaderships are more sensitive to the elitist nature of our women's movement and the slow pace at which its women's base is expanding. Operating under the two banners of women's awareness-raising and the empowerment of women, these programmes are run throughout the country in training workshops which, in the past few years, have covered the subjects of parliamentary and municipal representation with the aim of ensuring that the Council's maxim of achieving a certain quota substantially represents all groups of women.

The experience of Lebanese women of working in alliance is still in its early stages and associations complain that the number of those actively involved in running their work is gradually diminishing and that the work itself is concentrated among only a handful of organizations.

2. Non-governmental organizations combating violence against women (two examples): Examples of non-governmental/civil organizations which, at different levels and in different areas, are actively working, either exclusively or indirectly, to eliminate discrimination against women, are given below. Some of their activities over the past four years are also reviewed.

The Women's Democratic Gathering. For this body, the basic terms of reference are international treaties and conventions, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence

against Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. With centres throughout Lebanon, the Gathering has been working since its establishment in the mid-1970s to disseminate the culture of gender equality by way of its ongoing programmes. In particular, these include such activities as holding awareness-raising symposia and seminars for chosen groups of people who come up against the discriminatory Lebanese laws against women, raising awareness of the international conventions designed to combat discrimination, spreading the culture of resistance to domestic violence, providing listening and hotline support to women victims of violence and cooperating with the National Committee on Literacy at the Ministry of Social Affairs in the field of adult education programmes. Significantly, these programmes have been expanded and the number of those benefiting from them has in turn increased. Another outcome is that women have been attracted into working for the Association, which now has 160 women associates as a result.

Working in alliance with women's non-governmental organizations, the Gathering has this year implemented a programme aimed at raising Lebanese public awareness of how important it is for women to participate in politics. The programme objective is to encourage women to become involved in elections as candidates, voters and monitors of the electoral process from a gender perspective so as to determine the attitude of society towards the nomination of women as candidates. In all, 25 public awareness-raising symposia have consequently been held, along with five training courses for a number of female candidates, three courses on monitoring elections from a gender perspective and one expanded post-electoral symposium for women candidates, the aim of which was to evaluate the experience and draw lessons from it.

The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women: The Council is the first Lebanese association to specialize in dealing with the instances of violence to which women are exposed. Its human-resource base has expanded to the point where it now comprises 52 women volunteer members, a permanent specialist staff of female social assistants (three of whom work full-time) and three female administrative employees. The Council is a member of the Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence against Women and, by virtue of its ground-breaking work, remains one of Lebanon's main authorities in this field from both the practical and professional points of view.

In the past four years, the Council's work has evolved so that it now tackles four core areas of concern:

- It takes in women victims of violence around the clock and offers them support through listening and through family, psychological and legal counselling provided at two centres (Beirut and Tripoli). It also operates a hotline. Since its establishment in 1997, the Council has dealt with over 400 cases. It cooperates with the Ministry of Social Affairs in training programmes for women social workers at the development service centres located throughout Lebanon;

- It runs cultural information activities (seminars and workshops) aimed at disseminating the culture of resistance to violence and at providing an introduction to international conventions, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It also endeavours to promote and publish field studies and research on violence against women,

sexual harassment, honour crimes and other manifestations of violence against women;

- It provides training for those who work with women victims of violence and those whose occupations put them on the "front line", namely doctors, nurses, lawyers, policemen and so on;

- Lastly, the Committee is affiliated with all groups working in Lebanon to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and plays a part in their activities.

3. Women's committees in Lebanese political parties, trade unions, other bodies and non-governmental organizations

Some Lebanese women rally within the framework of political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations espousing ideologies that either implicitly or explicitly embody ideas of equality and non-discrimination between men and women. Examples include the Women's Committee of the Lebanese Trade-Union Training Centre, the Women's Progressive Union, which operates under the aegis of the Progressive Socialist Party, the Women's Bureau of the Phalangist Party, the Women's Board of the Association of Charitable Institutions and the women's committees in the Social Movement and the Human Rights Movement. The women on these committees work on the assumption that, although specific in nature, the issue of women cannot be separated from the issues in society. Finding no justification for gender separation, they instead urge women to engage in political, trade-union or social action from within political parties and mixed associations, as in any democratic society. These committees strive for the achievement of egalitarian and non-discriminatory policies within their own organizations.

The Lebanese Trade-Union Training Centre is the most recently established of the above-mentioned bodies; it was set up in 2000 on the basis of the need to improve trade-union performance by heightening awareness among workers, reviving action for demands, familiarizing workers with the international conventions and standards by which Lebanon is bound and seeking the amendment of domestic laws in order to bring them into line with international instruments. In other words, it covers everything likely to encourage a shift in the focus of trade unions from service-based action, which has become the norm in recent years, to organized and effective action for demands.

Women account for only 2 per cent of members of Lebanese trade unions (and over 25 per cent of the workforce) and are only minimally involved in their representative councils and leadership bodies. Accordingly, with support from the body responsible for the coordination of women's committees at Public Services International, the Centre is now striving for the establishment of a special women's committee in every trade union that will work to empower women within the union, promote the role of women and make demands on their behalf.

As a result of work done by the Women's Committee of the Lebanese Trade-Union Training Centre, six women have now joined the leadership bodies of three labour unions (the National Office of Litani, Social Security and the National Office of Riji) and are making demands relating to women's health and to support for women in their dual role, such as the establishment of workplace crèches.

4. Non-governmental organizations in the fields of culture, information and communications

- The Development Activity Research and Training Group: This non-governmental organization seeks to further the social development of the community by working to spread awareness of issues relating to gender, development and poverty, in addition to building the capacities of community organizations and those working in them. To that end, it provides training, disseminates information and offers institutional and organizational support. In the past four years, eight projects have been implemented. Most of these focused on gender, although some were directly targeted at women (economic empowerment, women's leadership). With the support of high-level expertise from Lebanon and the Arab world, the Group is currently implementing two projects. The first is a communication and information project on gender and development in the eastern and western areas of the Arab world and the second is designed to establish communication among government institutions and non-governmental organizations on the subject of poverty and development in Lebanon through a regular bulletin and an interactive website.

- The Lebanese Association of Women Researchers: Founded in the late 1990s, its aim is to bring together female researchers, promote their work, defend their rights and support those of them who are new and inexperienced. The overwhelming majority of its members (of whom there are about 40) are professors at Lebanese universities. The Association publishes a yearbook entitled Bahithat (Female Researchers), most editions of which have focused largely on women and women's issues. This yearbook constitutes a key reference work in the field of Lebanese and Arab women's studies. Current projects include one aimed at the integration of women's and gender studies into the curricula of the Lebanese University as a matter of (official) policy.

- The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World: Founded in 1973 in Lebanon's American University, its objectives include the establishment of a broad information base on women and improvement of the quality of life of women and children in the Arab world. It is also involved in cultural activities, documentation and publishing on women. Last year, the Institute produced a programme entitled "The basic living skills project", which is an informal educational curriculum for women without much education and for women working in development projects. The Institute publishes a periodical called Al-Ra'idah in English (in paper and electronic form) and in Arabic (in electronic form). It is the only women's periodical in the Arab world to be published electronically (over 100 issues have been so far been published).

- Informal groups: In any discussion of organizations which aim to achieve equality and fight violence against women in our society, it is impossible to ignore the informal groups operating in the civil/non-governmental setting, particularly since they are chiefly founded and run by young people of both sexes at a time when practically all non-governmental organizations complain of a chronic failure to attract young members into their ranks. These groups have set up their own websites and communicate with each other by electronic mail. The subjects of gender equality, violence against women and other women's issues are among their concerns. They include groups such as Total Secularism, the Civil Society Movement and the Women Readers' Group.

Chapter 4
Lebanon's reservations to the Convention

(Articles 9, 16 and 29 of the Convention)

The Lebanese State has made reservations, which continue to stand, to certain provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, specifically:

1. Article 9, paragraph 2, on nationality;

2. Article 16, subparagraphs (c), (d), (f) and (g), on questions of personal status;

3. Article 29, paragraph 1, on the settlement of disputes.

I. Nationality

Nationality is closely linked to the geographical, demographic, humanitarian, national and political circumstances of the State. Some States, for instance, implement a particular demographic policy on the basis of their economic and social requirements and are prepared to grant nationality, not on the basis of origin but on the basis of residence and/or birth. Others pursue a different demographic policy and do not easily grant nationality, as is the case in Lebanon, where the situation is governed by a delicate denominational balance.

It goes without saying that States are bound by the conventions to which they accede and by the fundamental principles observed in the matter of nationality. One of these principles is that "everyone has the right to a nationality", as affirmed in article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and prior to that in The Hague Convention of 1930, which states that: "... it is in the general interest of the international community to secure that all its members should recognise that every person should have a nationality ...".

Irrespective of marital status, women in Lebanon enjoy an equal right with men to acquire, retain or change their nationality. Article 6 of Decree No. 15 of 19 January 1925, as amended by the Nationality Act of 11 January 1960, provides that: "A Lebanese woman who marries an alien shall remain Lebanese until she requests deletion of her entry from the statistical records because she has acquired the nationality of her spouse." Moreover: "A woman who loses her Lebanese nationality as a result of her marriage to an alien may have such nationality restored to her following dissolution of the marriage at her request." (Article 7 of Decree No. 15 of 19 January 1925, as amended by the Nationality Act of 11 January 1960).

Hence, there is no inconsistency on the subject of nationality between Lebanese legislation and the provision of article 9, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

Lebanon, however, made a reservation to the above article 9, paragraph 2, insofar as it calls upon the States Parties to "grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children", whereas in Lebanese legislation the principle is otherwise.

As a country to and from which there is migration, Lebanon applies the following two principles in its legislation on nationality:

The first principle: The tie of blood takes precedence over the tie of land;

The second principle: The tie of blood is restricted to the father and excludes the mother.

The Lebanese legislator expressed these two principles by stating from the outset in article 1 of Decree No. 15 of 19 January 1925 that: "Any person who is born of a Lebanese father shall be considered Lebanese"

The Lebanese legislator, however, neither entirely overlooked the tie of land, nor fully excluded the possibility whereby a child may be granted the nationality of the mother.

In regard to the tie of land, on the basis of article 1, paragraphs 2 and 3, of Decree No. 15, the following are regarded as Lebanese:

"Any person born on the territory of Greater Lebanon who is not established to have acquired foreign citizenship by filiation;

"Any person born on the territory of Greater Lebanon of unknown parents or of parents of unknown citizenship."

There are only two instances in which a child is granted the nationality of the mother.

The first instance is that of an illegitimate child whose filiation is established in regard to the mother before it is established in regard to the father (article 2 of Decree No. 15 of 19 January 1925).

The second instance is that of a minor child whose mother has taken Lebanese citizenship and survives the death of the father (final paragraph of article 4 of Decree No. 15 of 19 January 1925). It should be pointed out that the Lebanese courts refuse to broaden the interpretation of this article, meaning that they regard the "death of the husband" as a mandatory condition. In other words, dissolution of the marriage while the husband is still alive does not remove the tie of blood that links him to his children.

Important as the second instance is, if the father dies, a naturalized mother is favoured over a mother of Lebanese origin when it comes to granting nationality to her minor children. The Lebanese legislator is expected to review the above provisions with a view to establishing equality between the father and the mother in regard to the benefit of Lebanese nationality for their children.

The bill drafted by the Minister of Justice in 1995 has encountered difficulties. It provided that a minor child may obtain special dispensation to enjoy the nationality of the Lebanese mother, provided that the child has constantly resided with the mother in Lebanon for a minimum of five years.

It is worth mentioning that a key amendment has been made to the benefit rules of the Civil Servants' Cooperative; the nationality of the children does not preclude a mother who is a civil servant from receiving benefits from the Cooperative for her non-Lebanese children (further details are contained in part two, chapter I, of this report). As for female wage-earners who are under social security, their receipt of security benefits for their non-Lebanese children has never been in dispute, as confirmed by the Information Circular No. 189 of 12 November 1987, which states that: "The right of the insured person (male or female) to receive social security benefits for the members of his or her family shall not be conditional on the latter having Lebanese nationality."

II. Personal status

Article 16 of the Convention contains two paragraphs: paragraph 1 comprises eight subparagraphs and paragraph 2 comprises one clause that essentially advocates a minimum age for marriage.

The provisions to which Lebanon has made a reservation are contained in paragraph 1, specifically subparagraphs (c), (d), (f) and (g) thereof, which emphasize that men and women should be granted:

The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution (subparagraph (c));

The same rights and responsibilities as parents in matters relating to their children (subparagraph (d));

The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and the adoption of children (subparagraph (f));

The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name (subparagraph (g)).

The explanation for this reservation lies in the fact that the Lebanese are not subject to one personal status law; instead, each Lebanese is subject to the laws and courts pertaining to his or her denomination. The Lebanese citizen is therefore bound by his or her membership of a recognized religious community (of which there are currently 18, as mentioned earlier) in regard to the regulation of personal status. Beyond that membership, it is impossible to create a non-denominational system for the regulation of personal status. Denominationalism played a major role not only in the constitution of the Lebanese people but also in the establishment of the Lebanese State and, alongside other economic and political factors, it continues to play an extremely important role to this day.

The personal status system in Lebanon has a constitutional framework insofar as article 9 of the Constitution provides that: "Freedom of belief shall be absolute and the State, in fulfilling the duties of veneration to God Almighty, shall respect all religions and creeds and shall guarantee, under its protection, the freedom to perform religious rites, provided that public order is not thereby prejudiced. It shall also guarantee respect for the system of personal status and religious interests of inhabitants from the various religious communities."

Lastly, under the constitutional amendment of 1990, leaders of the legally recognized religious communities are afforded the right to consult the Constitutional Council on matters relating strictly to personal status, freedom of belief, the practice of religious observances and freedom of religious education (new article 19 of the Constitution).

Overall, the above is evidence of the status of the religious text, so to speak, in Lebanese legal regulation and of the position of the religious communities under the Lebanese constitutional system. This is further emphasized by the independent judgement of the Lebanese Constitutional Council, which stated in its decision of 23 November 1999 that: "The Constitution further recognizes various rights of the religious communities, as stipulated in articles 10, 24 and 95 thereof, and more particularly in article 19, pursuant to which the leaders of the legally recognized religious communities are afforded the right to consult the Constitutional Council,

thus affirming that the Constitution recognizes the artificial personality of the religious communities, on the one hand, and their autonomy to manage their own affairs on the other, and consequently their right to defend their autonomy and their own particular religious characteristics." (Decision No. 1/99 of 23 November 1999.)

Several attempts have nonetheless been made to produce a unified civil code of personal status in Lebanon but they all ended in failure. These included a bill on optional civil marriage tabled by President Elias Hrawi, which was approved by the Cabinet on 18 March 1998 by a majority of 21 votes to 6, with the abstention of one minister. One of the merits of the basic draft was its regard for the equal rights and obligations of men and women in the institution of marriage.

Civil marriage is nevertheless a possibility available to the Lebanese, provided that it is contracted abroad. Hence, civil marriages contracted by Lebanese in a foreign country, whether between themselves or between them and foreigners, is a valid marriage that is recognized by the Lebanese authorities and registered in the offices of personal status. The court which is competent to examine any dispute that may arise in connection with such a marriage is the ordinary court with general jurisdiction, or, in other words, the civil court, and the applicable law is the foreign civil law under the terms of which the ceremony of marriage was performed.

This solution, however, is not available to all citizens. Moreover, some Lebanese regard it as undesirable; they believe that the Lebanese State is duty-bound to take care of their affairs overall, including their personal status, and have expressed their wish for the State to assume responsibility for that care.

The political parties and organs which supported the civil marriage bill are still fighting for its approval, particularly since opinion research conducted at the time showed that over 60 per cent of young Lebanese favour civil marriage. It is also worth noting that on 18 March 2002, a petition was signed at the entrance to the Lebanese Parliament demanding that a civil law of personal status should be drafted. A total of nine deputies signed the petition. Under the rules, however, 10 signatures are needed for a bill to be considered and put to the vote. As long as the task of legislation in Lebanon is entrusted to its constitutional institutions, in which regard the Parliament has first jurisdiction, the continuation of serious attempts to produce a single civil code of personal status cannot be ruled out, particularly in the light of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It should be stated that the Lebanese legislator (in addition to the Inheritance for Non-Muhammadans Act of 1959, which recognizes the equal rights of males and females) has already taken some of the employment-related rights from the inheritance laws of the religious communities and made them universally applicable, without distinction between males and females. These laws include:

- The law promulgated by Decree No. 8496 of 2 August 1974 relating to the designation of persons entitled to receive compensation for dismissal;
- Legislative Decree No. 136 of 16 September 1983 relating to contingency action, which, on the subject of compensation payable on the death of a wage-earner, refers to the provisions of the above-mentioned law of 1974.

III. Settlement of disputes

Lebanon made a reservation to article 29 of the Convention in accordance with paragraph 2 thereof, pursuant to which any State Party that so wishes may declare

that it does not consider itself bound by the rules set forth in the article concerning the settlement of disputes.

Part Two

Monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Chapter 1
Equality before the law

(Articles 2, 11 and 15 of the Convention)

I. Legal competence

With the exception of the laws relating to the articles to which Lebanon has made reservations (the laws on nationality and personal status), there are no provisions in Lebanese law to prevent women from enjoying legal competence. The initial report reviewed the overall legal dispositions in which no distinction is made between women and men.

A Lebanese woman, for example, has the right to administer her property on an equal footing with men and may dispose of it as she pleases; she may therefore sell, purchase, mortgage and transfer such property. By contrast, however, and contrary to that rationale and the principle of equal legal competence, a Lebanese woman may not, for instance, open a bank account in the name of her minor child, even if she uses her own assets, unless she has guardianship or trusteeship of the child. This is despite the fact that, technically speaking, a legal basis for such a transaction exists in civil law. The Lebanese Contracts and Obligations Act, for example, recognizes the acts of an uncommissioned agent (articles 148 to 160) and permits the conclusion of contracts in the interest of a third party (articles 227 to 231). Hence, there is no obstacle if a contract is concluded in the interest of future persons or persons who are not immediately specified.

It is not therefore the general legal rules which are the obstacle. The obstacle is that the ordinary laws are influenced by and conform to ideas which prevail in the personal status laws, a situation which should be rectified.

In the past five years, noticeable progress has been made in equalizing certain provisions, although discrimination against women persists in other provisions.

II. Progress achieved in various laws

The progress achieved centres around provisions which have been amended and others which are under consideration by Lebanese committees.

1. Amendments in effect: Amendments have been made to the Employment Act, the Social Security Act and some of the regulations relating to civil servants.

A. The Employment Act

Equal employment:

The Employment Act does not discriminate between women and men in terms of the right to work, employment opportunities and conditions, pay (the principle of equal pay for equal work having been established in Lebanon as far back as 1965), working hours and so on. On the contrary, the ban on the employment of women at night in some industries and on their employment in general in other specific industries was, at the time, regarded as positive discrimination. In 2000, however,

the provision of article 26 of the Employment Act, which had prohibited the employment of women at night in all mechanical and manual industries, was revoked (pursuant to Act No. 207 of 26 May 2000) and replaced with a new provision which explicitly prohibits any sexual discrimination between male and female workers with respect to type of work, amount of pay, recruitment, promotion, vocational training and dress. Consistency was thus achieved between domestic law and international norms, in particular those contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the international and Arab labour conventions to which Lebanon has acceded, specifically the International Labour Convention Nos. 90, 100 and 111, as well as the Arab Labour Convention No. 1, to which it acceded in 2000 (Act No. 183 of 24 May 2000).

Maternity leave:

In 2000, pursuant to the aforementioned Act No. 207, article 29 of the Employment Act was also amended in that the period of maternity leave was increased from 40 days with full pay to seven weeks, also with full pay, including the pre- and post-natal periods. Despite this progress, however, the maternity leave is still below that provided for in the International Labour Convention No. 103 on maternity protection, which Lebanon has not ratified and which provides for a maternity leave of not less than 12 weeks, at least six of them during the post-natal period.

Working hours:

Under article 52 of the Employment Act, it had been prohibited for employers to give pregnant employees any warning of dismissal from the fifth month of pregnancy. The ban then became applicable from the start of pregnancy until the employee's return to work following maternity leave (Act No. 207 of 26 June 2000).

B. The Social Security Act

Conditions for the receipt of security benefits by the children of insured persons:

In an instance of positive discrimination in favour of daughters, a person insured under the social security scheme would receive a family allowance for a daughter who was both unmarried and unemployed until she attained 25 years of age, without further conditions. A male child would benefit until he attained 16 years of age, unless he was unable to secure his own livelihood because he was studying full-time, in which case he would benefit until he attained 25 years of age. Pursuant to Act No. 220 of 29 June 2000, this positive discrimination in favour of girls was abolished and full equal treatment for the children of an insured person was recognized. Children now therefore receive social security benefits, without discrimination between males and females, until they attain 18 years of age. If they are unable to secure their livelihood because they are in full-time study, they receive benefits until they attain 25 years of age.

Conditions for the receipt of maternity benefits by an insured woman:

In regard to the conditions for receipt of maternity benefits, article 16 of the Social Security Act previously made a distinction between an insured women and the wife of an insured man. An insured woman would not receive benefits unless she had been covered by social security for at least 10 months before the presumed date

of delivery, whereas the wife of an insured man would receive benefits only three months after her husband had joined the security.

This distinction was abolished pursuant to Act No. 312 of 6 April 2001 and the required period of membership, set at three months, was made the same for both male and female insured persons.

Equal child benefits for male and female insured persons:

In 2002, Act No. 483 of 12 December 2002 revoked article 14, paragraph (e), of the Social Security Act and supplemented it with a general provision, on which basis the word "the insured" contained therein is now construed to mean the insured male and the insured female alike, without discrimination.

The provisions pursuant to which a mother insured under the social security scheme was not permitted to receive benefits for her children, except in specifically limited cases (death or incapacity of the husband, his attainment of legal age, etc.), were thus abolished. Consequently, children now receive social security benefits in the name of their mother if they are not in receipt of any similar benefits in the name of their father.

However, in instances where the conditions for the receipt of social security benefits are fulfilled in the case of both father and mother, the father continues to take precedence.

A husband receives no security benefits in the name of his insured wife, except in limited circumstances.

Approval and implementation of the voluntary health insurance scheme:

Beginning on 1 March 2003, the voluntary health insurance scheme approved pursuant to Act No. 248 of 9 August 2000 was introduced. Membership of this scheme is identical to membership of the compulsory public scheme and no noticeable distinction is made between males and females.

C. Regulations relating to civil servants

Retirement and dismissal

In 2001, article 25 of Legislative Decree No. 47 of 29 June 1983 concerning the retirement and dismissal of civil servants was abolished and replaced with a new text recognizing the equality of male and female civil servants (Act No. 343 of 6 August 2001).

Benefits, services and education grants

Beginning in 1999 and continuing to 2001, a number of positive developments occurred in regard to the right of female civil servants to receive benefits from the Civil Servants' Cooperative, as listed below.

In 1999, female civil servants were granted equality with male civil servants in connection with the receipt of benefits from the Civil Servants' Cooperative for themselves and their children (Act No. 149 of 30 October 1999).

In 2000, in order for a spouse to receive benefits from the Cooperative for his or her alien spouse and alien children, reciprocity by the State of the alien spouse or alien children was made a prerequisite (article 47 of Act No. 173 of 14 February 2000). This condition, however, was abolished in 2001. Consequently, a Lebanese

wife is now entitled to receive all benefits from the Civil Servants' Cooperative for her alien spouse and children in cases where no other source of benefit exists (Act No. 387 of 14 December 2001).

In 2001, a sophisticated model for the equality of male and female civil servants was also adopted concerning the receipt of benefits from the Civil Servants' Cooperative; in addition to the above, in the event that both spouses belong to the Cooperative, child assistance or benefit is given only to the spouse who is at the highest category or grade (Act No. 324 of 21 April 2001 and Act No. 343 of 6 August 2001).

Regulations on allowances and assistance:

The provision of the first clause of article 6 of Decree No. 3950 of 27 April 1960 concerning the regulations on allowances and assistance for civil servants was amended so that a female civil servant receives a family allowance for her incapacitated spouse simply by providing an annual report from the Medical Committee confirming his incapacity (Decree No. 3892 of 25 September 2000).

2 Amendments under consideration by parliamentary committees

The provisions of the Lebanese Penal Code are currently undergoing a comprehensive review, which began immediately after the panel concerned with the updating of laws (an advisory panel to the Office of the President of the National Assembly) had completed its proposal for a law aimed at amendment of the Penal Code.

In February 2003, the Parliamentary Committee on Administration and Justice adopted the proposal and formed a subcommittee tasked with studying and redrafting the text, which comprises 772 articles, representing overall the articles of the present Penal Code. At the time of writing this report, the Subcommittee had completed its study of 522 articles, including several which are discriminatory to women (covered in detail in the initial report). The Subcommittee has since made amendments to these so that they are now consistent with the principle of equality between men and women. The following comparison between some of the current provisions and the amendments made by the Subcommittee is provided by way of example.

Current text	*Amendment of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Administration and Justice*
Art. 487: An adulterous woman shall be punished by imprisonment of three months to two years. The partner of the adulterous women shall be liable to the same punishment if he is married and otherwise to imprisonment of one month to one year.	**Art. 487**: Adultery committed by a husband or wife shall be punished by imprisonment of three months to two years and a fine of one to five million Lebanese pounds. The partner in the adultery shall be liable to the same punishment if married and otherwise to imprisonment of one month to one year and a fine of five hundred thousand to five million Lebanese pounds
In the absence of a legal confession and flagrante delicto, the only admissible evidence against the partner in the adultery shall be that which arises from correspondence and documents handwritten	In the absence of a legal confession and flagrante delicto,the only admissible evidence against the partner in the adultery shall be that which arises from correspondence and documents handwritten by

Current text	*Amendment of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Administration and Justice*
by that partner.	that partner.
Art. 488: The husband shall be punished by imprisonment of one month to one year if he commits adultery in the marital home or openly takes a lover in any place. The same penalty shall be imposed on the woman partner.	**Art. 488**: Pursuant to article 257, the penalty stipulated in the preceding article shall be increased if adultery is committed in the marital home.
Art. 489: The act of adultery may be prosecuted onlyif the husband lodges a complaint and acts as a personal plaintiff. Neither the partner nor the intervenor shall be prosecuted except in conjunction with the husband. A complaint by a husband with whose consent the adultery was committed shall be inadmissible. A complaint lodged over three months after the day on which the adultery came to the notice of the husband shall be inadmissible. If the claim against the husband or wife is dropped, the public claim and the personal case against all offenders shall consequently be dropped. If the man consents to the resumption of marital life, the complaint shall be dropped.	**Art. 489**: The act of adultery shall not be prosecutedexcept on the basis of a complaint lodged by one of the spouses, who must also act as a personal plaintiff. A complaint lodged by a person with whose consent the adultery was committed or over three months after it came to the notice of such person shall be inadmissible. A person who incited, participated or intervened in the adultery shall be prosecuted only in conjunction with the adulterer. If the case for a personal claim against the adulterer is dropped, the public claim against him and against the accomplices in the offence shall consequently be dropped. Agreement to resume marital life shall be considered tantamount to dropping the complaint.
Art. 522: If a valid marriage is contracted between the perpetrator of one of the offences set forth in this section and the victim, prosecution shall cease and if ajudgement is delivered in the case, enforcement of the punishment imposed on the offender shall be suspended. Prosecution or enforcement of the punishment shall be resumed if, within three years of a misdemeanour or five years of a felony, the marriage ends owing to the fact that the woman is divorced without legitimate ground or a divorce is ordered in the interest of the woman victim.	**Art. 522**: Abolished.

It is clear from the above that Lebanon is committed to working for elimination of the discrimination against women embodied in the Penal Code. It is striving to that end, even though it may take time, bearing in mind that any amendment will become final only after it is approved by the general body of the National Assembly and promulgated by the President of the Republic.

III. Areas of discrimination against women

1. The informal sector: Excluded from the provisions of the Employment Act are workers in the agricultural sector and family enterprises, as well as domestic workers in private homes (most of whom are women). The latter group also still fails to receive social security benefits.

Of the above three categories, the mandatory provisions of the Social Security Act include only one category of agricultural workers, namely Lebanese labourers who are permanently employed by an agricultural enterprise. The statistics of the National Social Security Fund show that, at 23 October 2004, the number of individuals in this category who were covered by social security amounted to only 1,639 (1,480 males and 159 females), meaning that only a minority of women employed in agriculture receive social security benefits. Various studies indicate that, in 2001, the proportion of female workers in the agricultural sector represented 3.5 per cent of total female workers in the sectors of agriculture, industry, construction, trade and services.

As for family members who work in a family enterprise, they benefit only from the voluntary health insurance scheme.

2. The regulations on allowances and assistance for civil servants: Decree No. 3950 promulgated on 27 April 1960 concerning the regulations on allowances and assistance for civil servants still discriminates between male and female civil servants in regard to the entitlement to family allowances for children; a female civil servant receives no such allowances unless she is supporting her children because she is widowed or because her husband is incapacitated or is out of the country and has not been heard of for over a year, or unless she is divorced and it is established that the father is unable to pay the maintenance awarded against him. In other words, the situation of female civil servants remains similar to that of female workers under social security in the days before the legislator amended article 14 of the Social Security Act.

3. The general regulations on government wage-earners: Decree No. 5883 dated 3 November 1994 comprising the general regulations on government wage-earners discriminate specifically between female civil servants, who benefit from maternity leave with full pay for a 60-day period, and female wage-earners, whose leave in the same situation within the same administration is not more than 40 days with full pay.

4. The Income Tax Act: Article 31 of the Income Tax Act (Legislative Decree No. 144 dated 12 June 1959) discriminates between male and female taxpayers in that where a married female taxpayer in a couple with dependent children takes up a vocation or holds a position that is subject to tax, it is the husband who benefits from the additional deduction for the children, not the wife, whose income tax bill in this case is identical to that of a single taxpayer.

5. The Movable and Immovable Property (Transfer Duty) Act: In accordance with the provisions of the final paragraph of article 9 of the Transfer Duty Act (Legislative Decree No. 146 dated 12 June 1959), a male heir (and not a female heir) benefits from an additional exemption from duty if he is supporting a wife and children under 18 years of age.

6. *The Code of Commerce*: Under the heading of "Rights of the wife of a bankrupt", Lebanese law places severe restrictions on the right of a wife to recover her assets from the bankruptcy of her husband (articles 625 to 629 of the Code of Commerce). These are special restrictions that apply to the wife and not the husband; if bankruptcy is declared by a female trader, her husband is subject to the general principle with respect to the recovery of assets from the bankruptcy and not to any special provisions or restrictions. This unwarranted distinction between the bankruptcy of husbands and wives must therefore be removed.

Chapter 2
Gender stereotyping

(Article 5 of the Convention)

The data point to a steady improvement in the status of Lebanese women. This improvement, however, is not reflected to the same degree in the attitudes of the majority or among the grass roots or the elite. Evidence of the strength of this attitude includes such matters as, for instance, the undue delay in amending laws prejudicial to women, the fixed stereotype of women in the media and the widespread public disregard for women's affairs. Research shows a slow pace of change in the traditional division of roles between men and women, which is exemplified in the home by the type of conjugal partnership where the husband is allowed to control reproduction and the wife is given almost exclusive responsibility for child-rearing and domestic chores. In public life, it is exemplified by the stereotyping that still persists in the work and student settings, despite a general desire to overcome it. The observations below reflect the conflicting aspects and fluctuating trends in the development of Lebanese society as far as the gender-based division of roles is concerned.

In addition to the disparity based on social class, Lebanese society is distinct in that its members belong to different religions and in that each religious community has its own interpretations of religion and its own customs. As such, the Lebanese situation is typically complicated, as manifested in particular by the existence of conflicting signals side by side. The wearing of the veil, for example, is not necessarily an expression of a position in which the liberation and progress of women are stifled. Similarly, contemporary dress may also go hand in hand with traditional attitudes that are unfavourably disposed to the causes of women.

While recognizing that religious ideologies have a substantial influence in fixing gender in patriarchal societies, human rights and women's organizations are pursuing their efforts to expand the realm of women's rights and to formulate approaches and egalitarian programmes that, in the main, do not conform with those ideologies. Nevertheless, they endeavour to involve religious officials and representatives of the different religious communities in their seminars and conferences in a bid to develop the legislative enactments which stem from religious teachings and remove the marks of discrimination against women from some of their articles.

Although women are involved in public life (in teaching, employment and social activity), their participation in the world of politics remains minimal. The stereotypical categorizations in the Lebanese political system still largely impede

the political and social representation of forces in society, including women, which are not part of that system.

As for rural women, studies indicate a wider acceptance of education for girls in rural areas, for instance, and a conservatism about them entering employment. They also show that, in rural areas, there is a clear tendency for the husband to exercise control and much less evidence of joint decision-making.

The findings of research on women reveal that an "invisible wall" stands in the way of the aspirations of the new Lebanese woman, a wall of substance and boundaries that are difficult to pinpoint. Descriptive studies point to varying attitudes on this subject, whereas female officers in associations and organizations working to strengthen the status of Lebanese women complain that women lack awareness of their rights and fail to organize themselves to improve those rights. women - such as housewives, for example - say they are content with their situation and fail to recognize the merit of women's movements. At the same time, however, they want their daughters to lead a different way of life and take a different career path.

I. Gender stereotyping in public and private life

1. *In the home*: Descriptive studies indicate that there are roles which are for women and other roles that are shared between men and women. They also indicate the absence of any particular roles for men. The roles traditionally expected of women are connected with organizing, doing and caring. Those traditionally expected of men are based on determining goals and taking decisions.

2. *In the job field*: Regarded as men's jobs are those which demand leadership qualities (decision-making) or physical effort (construction work requiring physical strength, military service, mining, driving and rubbish collection). Regarded as women's jobs are those relating to care, nurturing and social communication (bringing up a family, education, health, media, tourism and administration).

3. *At school*: An analysis of schoolbooks shows a relatively sophisticated attitude towards women, although it also indicates a fixed view of women as bound by various social stereotypes. Only in rare instances are women depicted as decision-makers who act independently and take the initiative. Furthermore, these books contain various stereotypical models which are consequently imparted to learners in whom common patterns are then established as part of their innate make-up.

The models proliferated in this manner include:

- The model for activity whereby activities which involve feeding, caring, organizing, cleaning and unpaid work are female and activities which involve the intellect, science, defence, attack, leadership, management and productive work are male;
- The model for characteristics whereby courage is male and beauty is female;
- The model for occupations whereby male occupations rank higher on the social scale than female occupations;
- The model for scope in life whereby it is narrow for women and broad for men;

- The model for ownership whereby men own the capital and women own practical items.

There has been some positive change towards a more human depiction of men in schoolbooks. The masculine form, which is generally used to mean both sexes, is still predominantly employed, however. In addition, some researchers have observed that portrayal of the feminine role has been banished, as has the relationship between the sexes in favour of typically patriarchal relationships between the generations.

Although there is no research to confirm that school roles are sexually distinct, girls are entrusted with domestic and serving responsibilities which have a negative impact on their school performance and their choices of study. In addition, the expectation of "prudent" behaviour from girls, which embodies such traits as chastity, self-control, cleanliness and calm, places limits on the trial and error that is essential to learning, whereas trial and error is permitted for boys, because the behaviour of a "troublemaker" and the individuality, movement, freedom and mayhem which it entails are part of the make-up of the socially desirable male personality.

4. *In the media*: Substantial attention is devoted to women's subjects in the media. The presence of women in the media sector is also visibly increasing, particularly in the visual media, reflecting the fact that women are in the majority among students specializing in that area. There is a belief, however, that this numerical increase may be linked to the changes in and requirements of the media more than to essential changes in the status of women. In terms of substance, it remains largely bound by stereotyping in which women are presented as a consumer commodity or as consumers. Studies analyzing the content of women's pages in Lebanese newspapers, for instance, indicate positive trends that show progress in the media approach, but obstacles continue to stand in the way of highlighting the dimensions of the women's issue in the proper manner.

Various studies of television, which is the most influential medium, show that none of the key leading positions are occupied by women. Moreover, an examination of the obstacles to their professional advancement reveals stereotyping and discrimination against them as women.

5. *In family law*: Under the prevailing custom, men continue to be the designated head of household (taking no account of the higher proportion of women now supporting families, which, at 20 per cent, is at its highest in Beirut). This position of men as head of household is specifically enshrined in the personal status laws. The authority of men over the family is set against the requirement for obedience on the part of the wife. Until recently, women from the various religious communities were complicit in this requirement. Most Christian communities, however, recently abandoned the principle of obedience in favour of that of partnership between the married couple. In other religious communities, disobedience by the wife gives the husband the right to discipline her, although it is a principle that is disputed in recent interpretations by religious officials.

Mothers are considered to be responsible for childcare in partnership with men. In the event of divorce, the spiritual and religious courts have jurisdiction to decide matters relating to the care and nurturing of children. It should be said that these courts are distinctly male-oriented.

II. Efforts to change gender stereotyping

Social action by women in Lebanon is typically non-confrontational, which conceals the extent of the endeavour to change the status of women. A closer examination, however, reveals that a number of efforts are under way to alter the prevailing cultural stereotypes, including, for example:

(a) An increase in studies to detect stereotyping, wider action to minimize stereotyping and the establishment of women's intellectual groups operating from a woman's perspective;

(b) Satellite television channels and radio programmes specializing in women's issues;

(c) An increase in the number of women's training programmes run by governmental and non-governmental organizations that target women. Carried out mainly in partnership by these organizations, these programmes are implemented throughout Lebanon and have covered a variety of topics, including health awareness, in particular reproductive health, legal literacy, the fight against domestic violence, women's participation in parliamentary and local politics, small loans and so on. Women's associations also run various public education programmes on issues relating to women's rights, *inter alia*: the inclusion of women in project management; capacity-building and leadership skills; dialogues and discussions on the issue of women; the establishment of a communication network among regional units; the foundation of a gender centre for awareness-raising, education and training; the organization of workshops and conferences on women's issues; the organization of a campaign for participation in parliamentary elections; and the provision of incentives for women to join in the work of political parties.

III. Obstacles to changing gender stereotyping

1. Counter-mobilization: The attempts to change gender stereotyping are countered by efforts to strengthen gender-based roles and consolidate the expressions of culture which confirm the lowly status of women. These are embodied in devious intellectual shapes such as the call to "abide by the principles of religion" or the dissemination of ideas which attribute the demand for the elimination of discrimination against women to Western roots which are "alien to our customs and traditions" or ideas which advocate the need to postpone action for the fair treatment of women on the pretext that political and pan-Arab issues in general are a more important priority.

2. Lack of oversight and accountability bodies: Generally speaking, oversight and accountability bodies concerned with changing the stereotype of women are lacking. There is a body for monitoring the portrayal of women in schoolbooks that comprises the National Commission for Women's Affairs, the Educational Centre for Research and Development, the Family Planning Association, the Women's Council and experts and scholars on the subject. Its meetings, however, have been suspended for reasons which are unclear.

As for the portrayal of women in the media, there is no mechanism for monitoring by the Media Council or by women's organizations. The media is reproached for generally acting to disseminate the prevailing culture more than they intend to achieve its progress. Hence, no obvious effort is being made to change to stereotypical image of women in the media and there is a conspicuous absence of

any procedure leading to the imposition of penalties for exploitation of women's bodies in advertising.

3. Responsibility of the religious communities for family affairs. There is a notable absence of legislation on upbringing within the family. It is considered to be a private family matter that is subject to the principle of "sheltering" or "privacy", which usually shields it from the public domain. The principle of sheltering or privacy, however, is overridden if matters are brought before the religious and spiritual courts that are empowered to consider matters of personal status within a particular religious community, including family matters. In such cases, the competent court reviews the finer details of the conjugal and family relationship in which it is permitted to intervene. Studies indicate that the body of legislation in force in the context of personal status laws is clearly male-oriented and seeks to entrench patriarchal stereotypes.

IV. Violence and women

1. Family privacy and domestic violence. Descriptive and minor research conducted in Lebanon indicates that domestic violence is part of the widely prevailing gender stereotypes and that tackling this violence is subject to the principle of the "privacy" of the family and its particularity. There is no specific law on domestic violence and the mechanisms needed to handle such cases or deal with their victims are consequently lacking. The articles applicable in cases of battery, for example, are the general articles found in the Lebanese Penal Code. There is no legally recognized competent authority to which women may have recourse, for instance, if they are subjected to violence in the home.

The principle of family "privacy" adopted in the legislation and the civil judiciary is now conspicuously open to direct examination by the media in television and radio programmes that bring family problems into the public view; family members hold each other to account in front of viewers and listeners or in the various talk shows which, for over five years, have worked hard to expose the subjects of domestic violence, child sex abuse, the rape of wives and relatives and the like, which were previously never discussed.

One way in which the relative principle of "family privacy" is disregarded is where the security forces, for example, are permitted to intervene if, and only if, violence against female domestic workers is reported. The security forces, however, do not intervene if the subject of the violence is a family member, except where it is one of them who makes the complaint.

2. Sexual violence. Violent films and films and magazines which reinforce sexual violence are regarded as means of dissemination that hamper public morals and public order. The Lebanese legislator has therefore brought in straightforward measures against offenders that provide imprisonment and a fine.

Victims of sexual assault include those who are forced by violence or threat to endure or carry out an indecent act. The Lebanese legislator has laid down the requirement that an offender must compensate his victim. The amount of compensation is at the discretion of the court on a case-by-case basis.

In addition, on 6 June 2004, the Protection of Juvenile Offenders and Juveniles at Risk Act No. 422 was promulgated. Under article 24, such persons are considered to include anyone who is "exposed to sexual assault or physical violence that goes

beyond the types of discipline that are non-injurious and customarily permitted." The Act makes no distinction between males or females.

3 *Delinquency*. Statistics show a considerable disparity in the breakdown of juvenile offenders by sex in that the overwhelming majority are male; of cases reported in 2003, for example, 3 per cent were female. This percentage, however, is generally consistent with the perceived facts, although there is room for doubt in the extent to which cases of girl delinquents are reported. It is a striking fact that the majority are in the 15-18 age group and that over half of delinquency cases relate more to the self (acts of indecency, begging, protection and pilfery) than to an act of subordination of others.

4 *Marital violence*. Studies refer to the difficulty of speaking out about violence by a spouse. A descriptive study of the use of beating as a way of resolving marital disputes, for example, states that the majority of responses were in the negative. The mean average in the case of husbands, however, is double that for wives (5 per cent against 9.5 per cent). This study showed that such violence is concentrated in outlying regions, where it is twice as high as the general average in the rest of the Republic.

According to the same study, an extremely small percentage of men and women admit to beating as a method of resolving marital disputes. The majority of couples claim that talking is the most usual method pursued, followed by family mediation and "shouting", with mediation by friends at the bottom of the list.

5 *Resistance to violence against women*. Given the absence of official institutional and social mechanisms to tackle the issue of violence, the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women is holding various advisory meetings with responsible religious figures in a bid to draft legislation on protecting the family against violence, in close cooperation with a number of civil and religious judges.

The Council has also had a number of meetings with security officers with a view to cooperation in the matter of resources for combating violence against women. In addition, it provided training in 50 of the centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs throughout Lebanon to enable female assistant social workers to hold awareness-raising seminars in their areas. In the summer of 2004, an awareness-raising project was also run for young volunteers (male and female) in summer camps, of which there were 10 altogether.

The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women is currently carrying out awareness-raising activities, either by communicating directly with the groups concerned (women, young people and students) or by communicating publicly through the media. As the teaching methods employed in the awareness-raising campaigns have not yet been evaluated, their long-term effectiveness remains unpredictable.

In assessing the change in gender stereotyping in recent years, it can be said that various forms of deprecating women and the role of women continue to find expression. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the development which has taken place; seen optimistically, in some ways it resembles a quiet and peaceful kind of "revolution", at least in terms of awareness. The social, media, academic and school programmes relating to women have an increasing impact on the gender perspective and are likely to influence the mindset and the expressions in popular

culture. The work done by women's organizations leans more towards rationality and planning. It therefore appears that women have pierced the glass ceiling in assuming political and functional positions at the very top of the political and civil service hierarchy. A new generation of young women is also visibly emerging: they have a predominantly methodological and university background, are more involved in public life and are more forthcoming on the subject of women.

Chapter 3
Suppression of all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women

(Article 6 of the Convention)

I. Trafficking in persons

Pursuant to Decree No. 10328 dated 23 June 2003, a bill to sanction the Government's accession to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was referred to the National Assembly.

This bill was transmitted to five parliamentary committees, three of which have so far given it their approval.

II. Prostitution

As stated in the initial report, the legal provisions relating to this subject have still not been amended.

However, by acceding to the International Labour Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Act No. 335 of 21 August 2001) and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Act. No. 414 of 5 June 2002), Lebanon reaffirmed its commitment to the strengthening and protection of children's rights in general and of the rights of juveniles who contravene the law or who are at risk of delinquency in particular.

In 1983, Lebanon abolished the provisions of the Penal Code relating to the prostitution of minors (articles 535 and 536) and amalgamated the provisions on juvenile delinquents within a single law (Legislative Decree No. 119 of 16 September), since replaced by Act No. 422, promulgated on 6 June 2002, which concerns the protection of juvenile delinquents in contravention of the law and juveniles at risk. In accordance with this Act, a decree (No. 11859 of 11 February 2004) was recently issued establishing a special disciplinary institute for female minor prisoners (both those already convicted and those in custody).

The following tables illustrate the number of juvenile offences prosecuted in the last five years and the percentage of cases involving prostitution, although prostitution offences in the available statistics, set forth below, are sometimes shown as rape or attempted rape and sometimes as acts of indecency or sodomy.

Table 1
Juvenile offences: cases involving prostitution and associated criminal acts

Year	Total cases, including cases of property crime, crimes against persons, etc.	Total juveniles involved	Males	Females	Females (per cent)	Prostitution, rape and attempted rape	Acts of indecency and prostitution	Acts of indecency, prostitution and sodomy	Cases involving prostitution and associated criminal acts (per cent)
1999	1 283	4 270	4 095	175	4.09	55			1.67
2000	1 608	4 729	4 474	255	5.39	47			1.30
2001	1 602	4 332	4 137	195	4.50	47			1.30
2002	1 504	4 225	4 025	200	4.73		62		1.76
2003	1 460	4 198	1 981	217	5.16			58	1.67

Source: Federation for the Protection of Juveniles in Lebanon.

The above figures clearly illustrate that the proportion of cases involving prostitution and associated criminal acts is more or less fixed at an average of about 1.5 per cent.

The following table gives a breakdown of such cases by governorate.

Table 2
Juvenile offences : breakdown of cases involving prostitution and associated criminal acts by governorate

Year	Type of offence	Beirut	Mount Lebanon	Tripoli	Zahlen	Bekaa	Nabatiyeh
1999	Prostitution, rape and attempted rape	7	38	6	3	1	–
2000	Prostitution, rape and attempted rape	8	26	10	3	–	–
2001	Prostitution, rape and attempted rape	5	27	8	5	2	–
2002	Acts of indecency and prostitution	3	35	19	1	3	1
2003	Acts of indecency, prostitution and sodomy	4	32	14	2	3	3

Source: Federation for the Protection of Juveniles in Lebanon.

Chapter 4
Women and political participation

(Articles 7 and 8 of the Convention)

1. Women's rights in law

In its preamble and articles 7 to 12, the Lebanese Constitution provides for the full equality of all Lebanese in terms of rights and obligations, including full political rights and the right to hold public office. The foundation for women's

political rights was laid in 1953 pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 37, promulgated on 18 February 1953, and with Lebanon's accession, in 1955, to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1952.

Under the Constitution and the Code of Civil Procedure (article 2), international conventions take precedence over domestic laws in the event of any conflict between them. In principle and by law, Lebanese women therefore enjoy the same full political and civil rights as men (with the exception of those rights included under Lebanon's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). This priority given to international law and international conventions possibly provides the legislator with a pretext for justifying the failure to amend the Constitution with the introduction of a detailed provision that defines discrimination and prohibits it on such grounds as sex.

II. Current status of participation by Lebanese women in various aspects of political activity

Lebanese women first began to exercise their political rights in 1953. The proportions and types of such political participation varied in aspect and level. Then, as now, it was influenced by a set of social, religious, cultural, political and economic factors, leading to a wide gap between the provisions of the law on the one hand and actual practice on the other. Despite the indicators of positive progress achieved in the first years of this century, particularly in certain fields, as will be demonstrated below, the situation is still not as hoped.

1. Exercise of the right to vote (in parliamentary and local elections): The overall national statistics show no significant disparity between the percentages of men and women who exercise their right to vote; the rates of participation are almost equal for both sexes, with a difference averaging between 2 and 4 per cent in favour of men in successive electoral rounds.

A comparison of some of the studies available on the pre-war period (for which there are no official statistics) with official statistics on the electoral rounds conducted after the war (1992, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2004) shows a continuation of this pattern. It also shows no significant differences between the rates of participation by women in urban and rural areas. Hence, despite the high proportion of illiteracy in rural areas compared with urban areas (considered by some to be a reason for lower rates of participation), the rates of participation for rural women are seen to be equal to and in some regions even higher than those for urban women.

Table 1.
Breakdown of female participation in parliamentary elections by electoral district (in 2000)

	Female voters	*Females who voted*	*Per cent*	*Male voters*	*Males who voted*	*Per cent*	*Disparity*
Lebanon as a whole	1,444,020	604,751	41.8	1,358,071	602,312	44.3	2.5
Beqaa I	113,283	49,117	43.3	102,931	47,453	46.1	2.8
Beqaa II	68,059	27,594	40.5	64,250	28,402	44.2	3.7
Beqaa III	51,746	20,781	40.7	51,641	19,443	37.6	-2.5
South and Nabatiyah	316,309	146,621	45.0	294,823	133,704	45.3	0.3
North I	134,050	52,537	39.1	129,200	53,344	41.2	2.1
North II	185,714	71,527	38.5	180,481	75,942	42.0	3.5

	Female voters	*Females who voted*	*Per cent*	*Male voters*	*Males who voted*	*Per cent*	*Disparity*
Beirut I	68,441	25,392	37.1	61,816	25,829	41.7	4.6
Beirut II	70,086	22,742	32.4	61,838	22,854	36.9	4.5
Beirut III	75,926	23,648	31.1	67,45	21,264	31.4	0.3
Mount Lebanon I	76,603	42,370	55.3	72,694	43,224	59.4	4.1
Mount Lebanon II	79,091	35,340	44.6	75,616	36,971	48.8	4.2
Mount Lebanon III	123,103	50,499	41.0	118,663	55,157	46.4	5.4
Mount Lebanon IV	81,609	40,582	49.7	76,573	39,725	51.8	2.1

Source: Kamal Faghali, The Lebanese elections2000 : indicators and results (source : lists of the Ministry of the Interior).

This is attributable to the role played by cronyism, family allegiances, return favours and electoral keys in these areas and to the importance of women's voices in electoral fights, all of which prompt men to encourage women to exercise their right to vote. Taking exercise of that right into consideration and setting aside women's voting behaviour and the extent of their freedom to exercise the right, the above factors are a positive sign in favour of women's participation.

A comparison between the rates of participation in local elections on the one hand and parliamentary elections on the other reveals no significant differences in this pattern.

2. *Participation as candidates in national and local elections*.

A. Parliamentary elections: Prior to 1992, no women entered the Lebanese Parliament through the actual ballot (one woman representative entered by recommendation in 1963 for a period of six months, inheriting the seat vacated by her father on his death, and one woman representative was appointed in 1991, inheriting the seat held by her husband, who had been assassinated in 1990). Since 1992, three of the 128 deputies in the National Assembly have been women, or in other words, only 2.3 per cent.

Although still lower than hoped, the figures in table 2 below indicate a small and steady increase in the number of female candidates in successive electoral rounds. What is striking is the lower percentage of women eliminated from among the total number of female candidates and the more certain number of successful women candidates in the last three rounds. These figures, however, do not reflect the energy, competence and ambition of Lebanese women (for reasons to be mentioned below). There are nevertheless various signals, including in particular the drop in the number of women eliminated, to indicate that female candidates are now more serious, determined and practised in their pursuit of this matter (although approximately half of the number of female candidates stood in more than one election round and were returned once without being eliminated).

An examination of the breakdown of female candidates by number of key variables brings the following points to light:

- They come from all regions and religious communities (with the exception of some minority groups);

- A large number do not come from traditional political families or belong to any specific social class;

- The vast majority have top university degrees or lengthy experience in the non-governmental sector and in public life.

The identity of the successful women candidates points to the influence of traditional factors on the potential for winning and losing (funding, return favours, crony networks, political heritage and support from authority).

Table 2
Breakdown of female candidates in parliamentary elections by round

Electoral round	*Number of candidates*	*Number eliminated*	*Number of winning candidates*
1953	1	1	None
1957	1	1	None
1960	2	None	None
1963 (sub-election)	1	None	1 (recommendation)
1964	2	1	None
1965 (sub-election)	1	None	None
1968	2	1	None
1972	4	2	None
1991 (appointment)	–	–	1 (appointment)
1992	6	None	3
1996	11	1	3
2000	18	1	3

B. Local elections: The proportion of female candidates for municipal council seats in Lebanon during the pre-war period amounted to no more than 1 per cent of the total number of candidates. Similarly, no more than 10 women assumed municipal office in any one round (by ballot or appointment in the municipality of Beirut). As for the local elections held in 1998 and 2004, the number of female candidates and winners increased significantly; the number of women who declared their candidacy (including those who were eliminated) amounted to over 500 in 1998 and to over 700 in 2004.

Whereas a win by 139 women, including three elected as municipal leaders, was registered in the municipal elections in 1998, this number rose to some 220 in 2004.

The following changes are striking when comparing the breakdown of female candidates in the elections held in 1998 and 2004:

1. In 2004, the number of female candidates and winners increased throughout Lebanon, whereas there was a large regional discrepancy in the 1998 round;

2. In 2004, the number of female candidates and winners from the Muslim communities increased in comparison with 1998, when the number of winning female candidates from Christian communities was four times the number of female winners from Muslim communities, whereas the difference in the 2004 elections fell to less than twofold (1.8 per cent);

3. The standard of learning among the wide majority of female candidates rose in comparison with that of male candidates (as true for rural areas as for some urban areas, although literacy is the only requirement by law);

4. The percentage of winning female candidates among the total number of female candidates at the national and regional levels remained virtually static;

5. The number of winning female candidates fell in some major towns (from four down to one in Zahleh, for instance) and rose in rural areas, which is attributable to the fact that municipal contests in major towns are an extended or smaller version of parliamentary elections and other political contests and are consequently not confined to matters of advancement and favour;

6. The average age of female candidates was low compared with that of male candidates.

It should be pointed out that, despite the increase witnessed between 1998 and 2004, these straightforward figures are unreliable as a indicator of the higher participation or representation of women in local authorities for the following reasons:

(a) The number of municipalities grew between 1998 and 2004 owing to the creation of new municipalities and the fact that existing municipalities were counted among the municipalities and villages liberated in 2000;

(b) The percentage of winning female candidates among all winning candidates failed to exceed the figure of 2.5 per cent attained in 1998;

(c) The percentage of female candidates among all candidates remained at about 1 per cent;

(d) The number of female municipal leaders fell from three in 1991 to one in 2004;

(e) The number of municipalities in which females stood as candidates for seats was well below one third of all municipalities in Lebanon (181 municipalities only). In the new post-war phenomenon in which women run for mayoral office, 16 women were elected mayor in various parts of Lebanon in 2004 (women registered under social security on a compulsory basis). Bearing in mind the traditional view of the office of mayor (its importance in electoral processes and information-gathering, etc.), this number, small though it might be, is a significant indicator of either a change in attitude towards that office or towards the capabilities of women.

C. Leadership elections: In 1994, for the first time in Lebanon's history, a women announced her candidacy in the elections for the presidency of the Republic. These, however, did not take place, the term of the current President having been extended.

3. Participation by appointment:

A. The executive branch:

- For the first time since independence, the Government formed on 26 October 2004 and consisting of 30 ministers included two women;

- The period between the mid-1970s and 2004 saw a higher quota of women employed in government departments and public institutions (under the

jurisdiction of the Civil Service Commission) among the total number of civil servants in all categories of office. Hence, whereas women constituted 3.3 per cent of total employees in category 1 in 1995, this percentage now stands at 6.67 per cent and rose in category 2 from 6.6 to 17.37 per cent, in category 3 from 6.67 to 27.22 per cent and in category 4 from 11.7 to 28.7 per cent. A close examination of these statistics and of tables 3 and 4 shows that, despite this rise, the percentage of females continues to fall among the higher ranks of civil servants on the administrative scale. Furthermore, no woman has ever been appointed to the office of governor and only two women hold the office of district president.

Table 3
Breakdown of civil servants in government departments by sex at 1 October 2004

Permanent staff	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Category 1	114	8	122	6.5
Category 2	312	72	384	18.75
Category 3	1,455	570	2,025	28.1
Category 4	4,422	2,069	6,491	31.8

Source: The Civil Service Commission.

Table 4
Breakdown of civil servants in public institutions under the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Commission by sex at 1 October 2004

Permanent staff	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Category 1	10	1	11	9
Category 2	40	2	42	4.7
Category 3	93	9	102	8.8
Category 4	850	54	904	5.9

Source: The Civil Service Commission.

Table 5 similarly shows the increase in the number of women employed in the foreign service since the mid-1990s, particularly following the promulgation of Act No. 376 of 4 November 1994, which abolished a provision providing for:

- The transfer of a female employee in the foreign service if she married a non-Lebanese;
- The immediate dismissal of a female employee from the foreign service if she lost her Lebanese nationality.

Table 5
Breakdown of women in the foreign service by category of office (1995/2004)

		1995		*2004*	
Category	*Office*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
1	Ambassador	1	1.44	4	6.77

Category	Office	1995		2002	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2	Counsellor or consul general	5	7.44	9	14.75
3	Secretary, counsellor or attaché	12	10.9	24	24.48

Source: The Civil Service Commission.

The participation of women, particularly experts, in delegations sent abroad by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, is negligible, with a maximum limit of not more than 1 per cent.

It is not possible to calculate the participation of women as expert negotiating partners in the other delegations constituted by the competent minister. Sources state, however, that it also stands at no higher than 1 per cent of total delegations, except for delegations concerned with the affairs of women and children and other purely social issues (in particular delegations constituted by the First Lady), in which there is a preponderance of women.

The participation of Lebanese women in the United Nations and its specialized agencies is subject to the quota system and to the conditions for office in international organizations, in compliance with criteria set by the Secretary-General in order to prevent gender-based discrimination.

B. The judicial branch: The judicial branch has undergone remarkable development in comparison with other sectors as far as the percentage and levels of women's participation are concerned. As shown in tables 6 and 7 below, five of the 37 judges at the Court of Cassation are women. There are more female than male apprentice judges in the justice courts (41 females and 28 males in year one and 19 females and 9 males in year two) and in the administrative courts (seven females and one male in year one and four females and three males in year two). Of 112 apprentice judges, a total of 71 are therefore female.

As for the number of female judges who examine criminal cases, there are 32 divided among all governorates. In the justice courts, there are 10 women who are both judges and heads of chamber. Of female judges, there are 127 in the justice courts and 11 in the administrative courts.

According to predictions made by the Ministry of Justice on the basis of these data, full equality between women and men in this sector will be achieved in the next 10 years if this pattern continues. Numbers will therefore be equal.

It should be pointed out that, despite this increase in the number of female judges, membership of the Constitutional Council, the Higher Council of the Judiciary and the Justice Council remains a male preserve, notwithstanding the long experience and competence of a number of female judges. On 11 November 2004, however, for the first time ever in Lebanon, a woman judge was appointed as public prosecutor at the Court of Cassation. For the first time also, therefore, a woman entered the Higher Council of the Judiciary, which by law includes among its members the public prosecutor at the Court of Cassation as vice-president (article 2 of the Justice Courts Act, Legislative Decree No. 150 of 16 September 1983, as amended).

Table 6
Breakdown of the number of judges in the State Consultative Council by sex (1980-2004)

Year	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
1980	25	1	26
1985	20	1	21
1990	16	2	18
1995	26	7	33
2000	26	7	33
2003	28	7	35
2004	32	11	43

Source: Ministry of Justice, Directorate for the Affairs of Judges and Employees (11 November 2004)

Table 7
Breakdown of number of justices by sex (1980-2004)

Year	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
1980	271	7	278
1985	273	12	285
1990	256	29	285
1995	291	55	346
2000	276	80	356
2003	279	102	381
2004	307	127	434

Source: Ministry of Justice, Directorate for the Affairs of Judges and Employees (11 November 2004)

The situation in the financial courts (Office of the Comptroller) is no different than in the justice and administrative courts; in the early 1990s, there was only one woman judge in the Office of the Comptroller and three women held the office of financial controller. At that time, the law made no provision for the post of accounts auditor. In the late 1990s and at the start of this century, the number of women financial judges rose significantly, bearing out the expectations of the Ministry of Justice for the achievement of full equality during the next 10 years (see table 8).

Table 8
Breakdown of positions in the financial judiciary by sex (2000-2004)

	2000			*2004*		
Position	*Females*	*Males*	*Percentage*	*Females*	*Males*	*Percentage*
Judge	9	18	33	15	19	44
Financial controller	22	5	81	24	8	75
Auditor	10	17	37	12	16	42

Source: Office of the Comptroller.

A further indicator of the positive development in the status of women in the judiciary is the increase in the number of women notaries in recent years. Men have frequently been recruited to this position to the exclusion of women. Today, however, women are admitted, particularly in the governorate of North Lebanon, as shown in table 9 below. In the competitive examination held recently, of those who passed (and who had not yet been appointed at the time of writing this report), half were males and half were females (7 out of 14).

Table 9
Breakdown of notaries by governorate and sex (2004)

Governorate	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Beirut	34	2	36	5.5
Mount Lebanon	59	9	68	13.2
North	10	8	18	44.4
South	10	2	12	16.6
Beqaa	9	None	9	0
Nabatiyah	5	None	5	0
Total	**127**	**21**	**148**	**14.18**

Source: Ministry of Justice, Directorate for the Affairs of Judges and Employees (11 November 2004)

C. In security and military organs: Women continue to have only a small presence in these organs, in which their functions are administrative and not combat-related.

4. Participation in election campaigns (parliamentary and municipal): On this score, women were active before acquiring their political rights. Their participation has assumed various forms (such as that of energetic host at festivals, conferences and seminars). During the post-war period, however, there was a significant shift in the amount and type of this participation. Interviews conducted with candidates (both male and female) in urban and rural areas and with their election campaign officers in the elections (parliamentary and municipal) held between 1992 and 2004 revealed the following:

- The female element in the election campaigns of the majority of leading, wealthy or female candidates ranged between 40 and 60 per cent;
- Young women (particularly those between the ages of 18 and 21) constituted a large percentage of the females taking part, averaging between 60 and 90 per cent, with higher percentages in the campaigns of certain female candidates;
- This participation was not limited to urban areas but was also true for rural areas;
- Whereas some participated in the election campaigns in return for financial reward, a high proportion were volunteers, particularly in the campaigns of female candidates with no funding.

Opinions vary as to the explanation for this phenomenon, in which participation by the youth element was clearly evident. There are those who attribute it to the increase in political awareness as a result of the war, the rise in the

educational level of women, their entry into the employment market and the desire of young men and women (particularly among those of voting age) to express their political views. In addition are those who attribute it to the desire of young people for material gain. This explanation, however, is not borne out by the fact that large numbers of male and females were volunteers. Regardless of the underlying reasons for this phenomenon, its significance cannot be overlooked when it comes to training young men and women and raising their awareness of the political process.

5. *Participation in protest politics:* The participation of women in this area is linked to the whole issue of protest, in which they are largely active. Such participation is not confined to any particular age group; national and regional issues, particularly those relating to attacks on Lebanon and its sovereignty, attract females from all age groups, as in the demonstrations called by some parties. In the main, those who advocate protest urge the participation of all groups and applaud the participation of women, with the aim of either showing the volume of support which they have or forming a protective shield in the event of any confrontation with the security authorities.

Whereas large percentages of young people take part in demonstrations against government policies on human rights, the rights of women and citizens, freedom of expression, the media and Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, it is noticeable that older women are involved in protest politics about more immediately vital issues (high prices, for example).

Ever since the post-war period, the number of females who join in signing petitions aimed at registering a protest or demand (for example, the right of women to better political representation, respect for freedom of opinion and expression, the conduct of municipal elections, etc.) has visibly increased.

6. *Participation in political parties:* There are no accurate statistics available on the number of women affiliated with political parties, on the percentage of women among the total number of party affiliates or on party positions held by women. It is commonly known, however, that there are fewer women higher up in the party hierarchy. It is therefore rare to find more than one woman, if any, in the leading councils of but a small number of parties.

Compared with the 1960s, however, the number of those wishing to join Lebanese parties has fallen during the post-war period (as shown in the findings of more than one field study of sample groups of Lebanese), as has the confidence of the Lebanese as a whole in most parties and in the role and effectiveness of those parties as a mechanism of democracy. These findings thus apply to both females and males, although various factors reinforce the negative attitude of women to (non-religious) parties in comparison with the attitude of men, in particular:

(a) The party experiment led by women in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to a feeling of discrimination and dominance of the patriarchal male attitude, even in the most revolutionary and secular parties which lay heavy emphasis on equality;

(b) The way in which, after the end of the war, certain parties dealt with women members who had been active during the war (at the political, ideological and military levels) by moving them to social, educational, health and religious activities, which prompted the collective withdrawal of women from some parties;

(c) The weakness of the parties in Lebanese politics and the divisions which have recently caused upheaval in the majority of parties;

(d) The failure of parties to take serious action to improve their image and performance.

7. *Participation in pressure groups.* In this context, pressure groups as a term refers to legally organized groups, or in other words, labour unions, federations and leagues.

Statistics point to an increase in the number of women members of unions which impose membership as a condition for anyone wanting to practise the profession concerned (such as medicine and advocacy). The proportion of women members of these unions reflects the development which has taken place in Lebanese society concerning the entry of women into areas of work that were previously the preserve of males. It also reflects the increase in the number of women with specialist certificates. Women's participation in leading positions, however, is still small and no woman in union history has ever held the office of president, with the sole exception of the Union of Pharmacists.

As for organizations of which membership is not a prerequisite for practice of the profession and which offer no key advantages to their members, the presence of women remains poor in comparison with that of men. Higher up the organizational scale, the number of women is also so small as to be sometimes non-existent.

One of the main reasons precluding the advent of women is that the activity within such unions is politicized; union elections have become miniature parliamentary elections in which the feature of returning favours overrides that of claiming demands. Whenever political fights break out, the chances of women reaching decision-making positions diminishes under the shadow of the patriarchal male attitude which prevails, even among the best educated classes.

III. Factors determining women's participation in political activity

It can be said that the political participation of women in Lebanon is linked both with motivating and impeding factors. Of the former, it is essential to mention the widening of university education among women and the attention which women's organizations have devoted to the subject for a number of years.

The factors which have a negative impact on the participation of women in the political life of Lebanon relate to social, cultural and economic matters, as well as to features of the political system and political practices.

The social, cultural and economic factors include the following:

- The generally prevailing patriarchal male attitude in Lebanese society, which makes it difficult to picture women in a position of political leadership;
- The commonly negative view of political and party activity, in particular after the Lebanese war years (1975 to 1990);
- The limited financial resources available to women in all groups compared with those available to men;
- The drop in household income among the middle classes in particular.

Features of the political system and political practices which have a negative effect include the following:

- The focus in the Lebanese political system on the elements of modern and traditional political sectarianism and feudalism linked with a conventional social structure that is usually disapproving of the assumption of leading political positions by women;
- The poor status of women in the party leaderships;
- The failure of the Election Act, which has been repeatedly amended in successive electoral rounds, to provide any guarantee of equal opportunities for candidates and its failure, in particular, to include any provisions which place a ceiling on funding for election campaigns, bearing in mind that women seldom have a wealth of funds available to them for spending in large amounts on election campaigns;
- The reliance on major districts in parliamentary elections, which means that voters are less likely to know the candidate, thus further reducing the chances for women, given that it is only relatively recently that they have wished to wage any political battle. Female candidates for parliamentary seats in districts covering a wide area cannot rely on ready grass-roots support unless they are from traditional or fledgling political families or belong to parties which control such districts;
- Some of the legal and administrative provisions governing personal status records in which it is stipulated that women must submit their candidacy for parliamentary and local elections in their maiden name, which adversely affects the chances of a married woman if she is not originally from the area where her husband is registered;
- The rule that a woman's record must be transferred to that of her husband when the marriage is contracted, which has a negative impact on her candidacy for a municipal council, as she loses her seat if she marries a man from a municipality other than hers after she has been successful in local elections.

Chapter 5
Formal education

(Article 10 of the Convention)

I. General education

Education statistics for 2003/04 show that equal opportunities for education continue to be available to both sexes in Lebanon. In the various sectors of education, the breakdown of pupils by sex is as follows:

Table 1
Breakdown of total Lebanese pupils by sex in the various sectors of education

Education sector	*Females (per cent)*	*Males (per cent)*
Official	53	47
Free private	47.8	52.2
Fee-paying private	48.1	51.9

Education sector	*Females (per cent)*	*Males (per cent)*
Total	**49.6**	**50.3**

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

The proportion of females is at its highest in State education, suggesting that girl quotas are at times low in the more advanced levels of education, which partially invalidates the principle of equal opportunities for both sexes. As for the low proportion of boys in the intermediate stage (in State education), it may, in theory, be attributable to the fact that they move over into vocational education, which will be discussed later, or to the drop-out factor, by which they are more affected than girls.

Statistics from the Education for All plan indicate the following rates of enrolment (1998-2001):

Table 2
Breakdown of gross* and net school enrolment by stage of education**

Stage of education	*Gross enrolment rate (per cent)*	*Net enrolment rate (per cent)*
Kindergarten	110.7	79.1
		(slight differences between the sexes)
First and second cycles	110.8	68.3
		(slight differences between the sexes)
Third cycle	84.2	36.6
		(differences in favour of females)
Total in basic education	101.7	57.4
		(differences in favour of females)

Source: Ministry of Education and Higher Education, National Action Plan for Education for All in Lebanon (2003-2015), February 2003.

* The gross enrolment rate equals the number of pupils registered (irrespective of age), divided into the number of inhabitants of school age in the stage in question.

** The net enrolment rate equals the number of pupils registered, divided into the number of inhabitants of school age in the stage in question.

In a nutshell, the gross enrolment rate in basic education is 101.7 per cent, compared with 57.4 per cent for the net enrolment rate, with slight differences between the sexes in favour of females (these two percentages indicate the overall number of inhabitants at the age of basic education who are registered).

A further examination of the breakdown of pupils by sex in the different stages of education and specializations at the secondary stage produces the following data.

Table 3
Breakdown of pupils by sex in the different stages of education and specializations at the secondary stage

Stage/sex	*Females (per cent)*	*Males (per cent)*
Kindergarten	48.2	51.8

Stage/sex	*Females (per cent)*	*Males (per cent)*
Primary	48.2	51.8
Intermediate	52.4	47.6
Secondary		
First form combined studies	55.1	44.9
Second form science	46.7	53.3
Second form humanities	70	30
Third form literature and humanities	82.8	17.2
Third form social and economic studies	57.1	43.9
Third form general science	26.3	73.7
Third form life sciences	52.1	47.9

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

As for choice, it is noticeable that girls tend to specialize in literature and the humanities more than boys, who lean more towards pure science specializations. These choices are not the result of any specific programmes of instruction as much as they are a response to the prevailing social expectation and the outcome of a social upbringing that is still characterized today by gender discrimination.

The Ministry of Education has a directorate that provides advice and guidance. The reports produced by this directorate give no indication of the discrimination between the sexes. The directorate, however, offers no vocational guidance for students, even though it recognizes the importance of doing so and has made it part of its future strategy for action. Vocational guidance is limited to instances in which, two or three times a year, presentations on the job market and the possibilities available are given by outsiders.

The breakdown of Lebanon's schools in 2003/04 by education sector and pupil gender is as follows:

Table 4

Breakdown of schools by pupil gender in the general education sectors

Education sector	*Male-only (per cent)*	*Female-only (per cent)*	*Mixed*
Official	7.4	4.4	88.2
Free private	0.3	1.1	98.6
Fee-paying private	0.5	0.8	98.7
Total	**2.7**	**2.1**	**95.1**

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

Co-education constitutes the overwhelming proportion of education and is growing (standing at 92.4 per cent in 1998), thus indicating a tremendous social demand. On the face of it, it can be said that the education received by pupils of both sexes is equal in terms of study curricula, examinations, teaching staff, premises and school equipment. Studies indicate, however, that the subjects taught at school embody values and stereotyping that, despite improvement, are still male-oriented.

A minor study on co-education shows that it has a negative impact on females as far as their own assessment of their knowledge is concerned. Co-education also has a negative impact on their attitudes to gender, since they emerge as more obviously stereotyped and less as advocates of sexual equality. Moreover, their school results are badly affected; their averages are below the norm, in addition to which they voice a lower opinion of their teachers. On the other hand, the study found that co-education has a positive effect as far as talent-based subjects are concerned. It also found a growing trend among girls to take up sports and extra-curricular activities and that girls are turning more towards top executive and liberal professions than was previously the case. Furthermore, students of both sexes are demanding co-education; it offers the potential for adjustment and individual openness and prepares them for life together in the community.

The breakdown of teachers by sex in the general education sectors is as follows:

Table 5

Breakdown of teachers by sex in the general education sectors

Education sector	*Males (per cent)*	*Females (per cent)*
Official	32.6	67.4
Free private	14.3	85.7
Fee-paying private	26.5	73.5
Total	**24.4**	**75.6**

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

Overall, the proportion of female staff in education is high but diminishes the higher the level of education (75 per cent at the secondary stage and 31 per cent at the university stage). The percentages indicates an escalating feminization of the assumption of responsibility for education. As in other countries, studies on this subject have indicated a close connection between the feminization of education and failure to take on board its merit.

As for educational administration, statistics show that, of 1,161 head teachers at the primary stage, 311, or 26.7 per cent, are female, and that, of 224 at the secondary stage, 31, or 12.7 per cent, are female, meaning that the actual number of female teachers in education does not compare with their participation in the management and decision-making in such education.

II. Technical and vocational education

According to statistics from the Educational Centre for Research and Development, females accounted for 41.3 per cent of total students in technical and vocational education in 2003/04. The gender disparity is due to the fact that a large percentage of males who are unable to complete their regular studies (and who number more than females in the primary and intermediate stage) transfer to this sector, whereas a substantial number of female drop-outs move towards the possibility of marriage and child-bearing.

The number of females in the further education sectors (secondary and above) is increasing and is equally divided between the State and private sectors, as follows:

Table 6
Breakdown of the percentage of females in vocational and technical education by type of certificate

Sector	*Vocational proficiency*	*Vocational intermediate*	*Vocational secondary*	*Technical baccalaureate*	*Technical honours*	*Technical degree*	*Technical education degree*	*Total*
State :								
Number	35	451	24	7,905	4,439	630	21	13,505
Percentage*	11.5	24.1	2.5	44	46.9	30	26	41.3
Private :								
Number	31	1,146		9,719	4,627	69		15,592
Percentage*	3.2	33.2		42.7	45.3	37.2		41.4

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

* Percentage of the overall total of students for each certificate.

Areas of specialization in vocational and technical education:

The range of specializations in vocational and technical education appears to be wider for males than for females. There are no girls at all in the specializations of mechanics (vehicle, heating and refrigeration), electronics, hydraulics, pneumatics, aircraft maintenance, hotel management, electrics, machine mechanics, fashion design, industrial mechanics and maintenance, electrical mechanics, mining and industrial facilities, industrial electricity, health supplies, building electrics and carpentry, sheet metal work, television and radio repair, offset printing, lathing, welding, works and construction, audio-visual equipment, building maintenance, building renovation and bakery work. The technical and vocational specializations altogether taken up by females are nutritional science, specialist education, dressmaking, sewing, childcare and first aid.

There is typically more gender stereotyping in the technical and vocational education sector than in general education, which is perhaps due to the fact that this sector welcomes less affluent groups among whom traditional values are normally strong.

The proportion of female teachers in technical and vocational education in the 2003/04 academic year, again according to the statistics of the Educational Centre for Research and Development, stood at 45.4 per cent in the State sector and 45 per cent in the private sector.

III. Illiteracy

In 1998, a law providing for compulsory education up to the age of 12 as a first phase and to the age of 15 as a second phase was approved. This law, however, was not linked to free education and no measures were put in place to regulate its implementation. The Education for All plan comprises a number of steps to be

completed by 2015. These relate to early childhood, basic education, children and young people who are out of school and adult education. No special or specific measures for females are mentioned in the plan.

The illiteracy rate for females is high at 17.4 per cent (compared with 9.2 per cent for males). According to 1997 statistics, the breakdown of this rate between the sexes by age group is as follows:

Table 7
Breakdown of the illiteracy rate by sex and age group

Age group	*Females (per cent)*	*Males (per cent)*
15-19	2.3	2.4
20-24	3.9	2.7
50-59	36.4	12.2

Source: The Education for All plan. The statistics are taken from a study of household living conditions, conducted in 1997.

Lebanon has a national literacy committee, the aims of which are, inter alia, to combat illiteracy and halve illiteracy rates by 2015. The Committee's successes include the training of literacy tutors (210 tutors in development service centres, 389 tutors in non-governmental associations, 143 tutors in the military establishment and 15 tutors in the Directorate of Prisons). The University Student for Literacy (UNILIT) programme, which aims to involve university students in literacy activities by granting them free credit for every 40 hours of tutoring they provide within the programmes, has also been implemented. The eradication of illiteracy is now also included as part of the academic curriculum at universities.

Literacy classes benefiting 3,200 learners, one third of them women, were organized in 33 main centres and 22 branches of the development service centres. Classes benefiting a further 2,524 learners, over half of them women, were also run by 25 non-governmental associations. A teaching programme has been developed and literacy books have been produced; in writing these books, careful attention was paid to incorporating the concept of gender with the aim of altering thought and behaviour patterns.

The literacy programmes are facing a number of difficulties, including: the lack of studies to assess such programmes (although they are estimated to benefit 56 per cent of women participants); the high cost of the programmes; the failure to develop training programmes geared to the productive needs of male and female participants; and the inability to offer material incentives, such as payment of travel expenses for illiterate women, particularly those from deprived areas.

Those running the above programmes observe that women show a greater commitment to and desire for literacy than is the case with men. The reason for this is that, in the case of some men, illiteracy does not stand in the way of employment, particularly in physically demanding sectors, whereas job opportunities are few and far between for illiterate women (who are usually not well-off). Within the family, the need to keep track of their children's schoolwork is a further incentive for women to acquire a knowledge of reading.

IV. Drop-out and failure

As for programmes for children and young people who out of school, it is stated in the Education For All plan that, on the basis of the statistical data available, the number of children who out of school stands at 22,510 in the 7-11 age group and 18,037 in the 12-14 age group (sex unspecified). The State will be opening study sections at an annual rate that allows all such children to be accommodated in the basic education stage (Education for All plan).

The Education for All plan indicates that failure rates are lower among females than among males (14 per cent as opposed to 20.2 per cent). The same is true for drop-out rates (1.9 per cent as opposed to 2.8 per cent), on the basis of data for 1996/97. No further studies on the subject have since been conducted, although all indicators show a continuing discrepancy in favour of girls.

V. Sports activities

The official education policy indicates no sexual discrimination as far as sports activities are concerned. A number of girls took part in this year's Olympic Games, one of them winning a gold medal. No special dress rules are officially imposed. In view of the wide variety of groups enrolled in education, however, some schools require dress to be modest and forbid the wearing of swimming costumes. Although not male-only, the sports facilities available are more attractive and accessible to males.

VI. Higher education

In higher education, there were more female than male students in 2003/04 (53.6 per cent for females compared with 46.4 per cent for males). The same was true for the number of graduates; in 2002/03, the breakdown of graduates was as follows:

Table 8
Breakdown of graduate students by sex in institutions of higher education

Type of institution	*Males (per cent)*	*Females (per cent)*
Universities	44.4	55.6
Institutes	67.3	32.7
Colleges	58.3	41.7
Centres	69.9	30.1
Total	**46.1**	**53.9**

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

The predominant share of females in university education in Lebanon is not met with a curriculum and management that take this factor into account. There are only three universities that offer gender- or women-oriented programmes. The first is the American-Lebanese University, which has an institute for women's studies that oversees a number of curricula for women. The second is Balamand University, which is endeavouring to introduce the gender perspective into all subjects offered in the faculty of health. The third university is the American University in Beirut,

which nominally includes a curriculum for women's studies within its programme. In practice, however, it is ineffective.

The Lebanese University: The Lebanese University has the largest number of university students in Lebanon. In 2002/03, from an overall total of graduates which stood at 9,378 male students and 10,940 female students, the share of the Lebanese University was 34.6 per cent of total male graduates and 51.9 per cent of total female graduates (according to the statistics of the Educational Centre for Research and Development for 2003/04).

Despite the preponderance of females among students and administrators at the Lebanese University, as a group they still have no overall input into the thinking on its public affairs and the formulation of its policies. In its own assessment of the situation, the Lebanese University omitted to make any reference to aspects concerning the status of women.

The occasional descriptive study indicates that female professors in the Lebanese University are particularly interested in its development and work hard to ensure that it keeps pace with cultural changes and with intellectual issues which crop up in the area of culture, including women's issues. Members of the Association of Lebanese Women Researchers, the majority of whom are female professors at the Lebanese University, are currently implementing a project to "integrate women's studies and the gender concept into the academic policy of the Lebanese University".

University specializations: The specializations which are practically male-only are confined to mechanical and electrical engineering, whereas the range of those which are practically female-only is wider, comprising education and nutrition, psychology, legal obstetrics, microbiology, bacteriology and environmental systems management.

Compared with earlier statistics dating back to the 1970s, the specializations which attracted a large majority of females grew from 10 in 1994/1995 to 14. It is clear that the proportion of females entering certain specializations in which males were the large majority is higher than before. Examples are physics, geology, medicine, electrical engineering, Islamic studies and general law. Certain other specializations, such as medicine, political science, economics, chemistry, accounting, marketing, advertising and business management, continue equally to attract students of both sexes. Moreover, specializations in which males were previously the majority, such as geography, have shifted over to a female majority. It can be said that there is a strong tendency towards multiplication of the numbers of females in the different university specializations.

The number of female professors in higher education stands at 3,699 (or 30.8 per cent of total teaching staff) and the number of females in the administrative staff amounts to 2,076 (or 53 per cent of total administrators). The number of female professors at the Lebanese University stands at 1,134 and the number of female administrative employees at 996 (or 42.3 per cent of total administrative staff).

The rate of participation of female university professors fails to match their participation in decision-making positions. In the main Lebanese universities, for instance, each of which has no fewer than 100 female professors, female deans are still noticeably seldom.

Table 9
Breakdown of female deans in some of the higher education institutions

University	*Number of female deans*	*Total deans*
The Lebanese University	1	16
The American University	1	7
The Lebanese-American University	1	8
The Jesuit University	2	31
The Arab University	2	9
The Lebanese International University	1	5
Balamand University	None	9
Notre Dame University	None	6
Universite Saint Esprit de Kaslik	None	13

Source: Educational Centre for Research and Development, Statistical bulletin for the academic year 2003/04, Ministry of Education.

No data are available on grants or scholarships abroad. The increase in female university professors and academic scholars, however, shows that such opportunities are available to women.

In assessing the outcome of the academic achievement, there is a general tendency to overstate the equal opportunities for females. The nature and substance of these opportunities, however, are greatly in need of review. The opportunities for females are higher in State education than in fee-paying private education, which is of superior quality. The substance of what females learn remains out of line with their leanings towards independence and individuality. The legacy of illiteracy still weighs on them heavily and concerted efforts are needed to alleviate it. In addition, the ascent of females in university education has not been paralleled by an assumption of responsibility for the management of such education or by any befitting participation in planning and assessment.

Chapter 6
Employment and the economy

(Articles 11 and 13 of the Convention)

I. Socio-economic activity

1. Growth in household incomes: Statistical studies show that, between 1997 and 2001, household incomes from employment were set at an annual average of between 15,541,000 Lebanese pounds (LL) in 1997 (approximately US$ 10,160) and LL 15,542,000 in 2001 (approximately US$ 10,360). The conclusion from these studies is that the proportion of households with a monthly income of less than LL 1,200,000 stood at 61 per cent. Some 31.5 per cent of households stated that their income was insufficient, while 30 per cent stated that their income was barely sufficient. In addition, women suffer payment of low monthly wages in comparison with the wages earned by men in the same occupational groups; the findings of a study on household living conditions in Lebanon in 1997 show that a woman's average monthly income from employment amounted to LL 568,000 (US$ 369), compared with LL 732,000 (US$ 488) for men, or a ratio of 1 to 0.77 per cent. This

ratio is strikingly low among senior executives and managers, among whom the pay received by women is 64 per cent of that received by men.

Table 1
Growth in income level in Lebanese pounds and United States dollars between 1997 and 2000

Year/Average income	*1997 (LL)*	*1997 (US$)*	*2001 (LL)*	*2001 (US$)*
Average annual household income in Lebanon	15,241,000	10,160	15,542,000	10,361
Average monthly pay for men	732,000	488	Unavailable	-
Average monthly pay for women	568,000	378	Unavailable	-

Source: Central Administration for Statistics, Living conditions in Lebanon, 1997.

The study carried out by the National Employment Office in 2002 in the liberated villages in the border strip indicates that the average monthly income in those villages amounts to an estimated LL 606,000 (US$ 404) for men, compared with LL 515,000 (US$ 363) for women.

Table 2
Breakdown of Lebanese households by income group between 1959 and 2001

Year	*1959 to 1960 (per cent)*	*1973 to 1974 (per cent)*	*1994 to 1995 (per cent)*	*2001 (per cent)*
Low-income group	50	22	52	61
Middle-income group	32	57	38	30
High-income group	18	21	10	9

Source: 1960-1961, mission of the Institut International de Recherche et de Formation Education au Développement (IRFED).
1973-1974: Shemeil Yves.
1994-1995: Centre d'information stratégique et économique, Commerce du Levant, July 1995.
2001: Chohig Kasparian, L'entrée des jeunes libanais dans la vie active et l'émigration, Presses de l'Université Saint Joseph.

2. Growth in the employment market: In many instances, the Lebanese economy is marked by something of a contradiction. On the one hand, the economic structure is clearly distributed throughout the different sectors but is contrasted, on the other hand, by a services sector that is clearly predominant and is continuing to grow at the expense of traditional productive sectors, in particular the agricultural sector. The active employment market for men is distinguished by the major share of the sales sector, where the proportion of male workers amounts to 12.6 per cent of the total. At the same time, the employment of Lebanese women is highlighted in the three key sectors of education (62 per cent of total female workers), office work (15.3 per cent) and sales (13.3 per cent).

The following table gives a breakdown of the Lebanese male and female workforce in the different sectors.

Table 3
Breakdown of the Lebanese male and female workforce by occupation in 2000 (per cent)

Occupation	*Males (of total males)*	*Females (of total females)*	*Females to males*
Armed forces	5.1	0.2	1.1
Senior executives	0.2	-	2.1
Company directors	1.4	1.1	18.7
Company managers	3.6	0.6	4.3
Science experts	2.5	1.2	12.2
Health experts	1.2	3.1	43.1
Education experts	2.5	17.4	66.5
Other science experts	1.4	3.1	38
Middle professions in technical sciences	1.5	0.5	9.3
Middle professions in health	0.3	2.6	70.9
Middle professions in education	0.5	7.4	79.8
Other middle professions	4.4	6.8	30.6
Office employees	4.1	15.3	51.5
Other administrative employees	1.0	3.2	47.2
Personal services	7.7	7.3	21.4
Sales and marketing	12.6	13.3	23.3
Farmers and skilled labourers	5.3	2.1	10.1
Construction and quarry workers	8.4		-
Miners and steelworkers	9.4		-
Printers and printworkers	0.8	0.4	11.4
Other tradespersons	5.6	4.3	18.0
Fixed machinery operators	1.0	0.1	3.2
Mobile machinery operators	2.7	4.5	31.8
Vehicle operators	8.7		
Unskilled service workers	4.5	3.9	19.9
Agricultural workers	2.0	1.3	15.9
Construction and public works labourers	1.6	0.1	2.3
Total	**100**	**100**	**22.2**

Source: Chohig Kasparian, L'entrée des jeunes libanais dans la vie active et l'émigration.

The productivity of workers is closely related to a number of factors, in particular background and education. Studies indicate that 11.5 per cent of workers are uneducated and failed to complete the primary stage of school, which has negative consequences for productivity and consequently for household incomes.

As a result, it was natural that families should attempt to secure additional incomes; family members already in work took second jobs and those out of work went in search of employment. The proportion of young women workers therefore increased, together with efforts to establish small productive projects for new workers. Many small enterprises were consequently established in several areas of Lebanon; in 1996, there were some 200,000 such enterprises, non-governmental finance institutions having played a part in strengthening the activity in this sector. Owing to the worsening economic situation, however, the volume of small and medium enterprises since diminished. "Micro-enterprises", accounting for over 85

per cent of all working enterprises, were therefore established, promoting activity in the marginalized informal sector. The productive crisis in this sector worsened, however, and the fall in income for small enterprises had adverse repercussions on the employment situation, particularly among women who are ineligible for grants or benefits from social security or other insurance bodies, notably agricultural and domestic workers.

In the face of these recurrent and varying crises, heads of household were obliged to seek alternative incomes, to which end children were put to work and women sought to create the opportunity of work as the mainstay for a minimum decent livelihood.

Studies indicate that, in line with the growing economic and social responsibilities of Lebanese women, the proportion of female heads of household increased during 2001 to some 12.5 per cent. Given the fall in the illiteracy rate, especially among women, and the pressure on the cost of living caused by the economic situation, the number of women wishing to work has risen. One study states that, in 2001, there were approximately 1.4 million economically active persons, representing some 35 per cent of total inhabitants in Lebanon and 50 per cent of those of working age. In 2001, the proportion of economically active women amounted to some 25 per cent of women of working age, an increase of 3.3 per cent since 1997.

3. *Breakdown of workers by sector and region*: In a study of household living conditions, the overall size of the Lebanese workforce (including the unemployed and migrants) was estimated at 1,362,232 persons, employed mainly in the service industry. Table 4 below shows that the proportion of workers in agriculture has fallen to 9.3 per cent of the overall total, compared with 15.1 per cent in industry, 11.6 per cent in construction and 23.2 per cent in commerce. The agricultural sector has consequently suffered a severe blow; in 1970, it had accounted for 18.9 per cent of total workers. The share of industry also fell from 17.8 per cent in 1970 to 15.1 per cent in 1997.

Table 4
Breakdown of the workforce by economic sector and region in 1997 (per cent)

Governorate	*Agriculture*	*Industry*	*Construction*	*Commerce*	*Services*	*Total*
Beirut	0.2	12.4	7.0	26.6	53.8	100
Mount Lebanon	0.6	20.8	9.9	25.4	43.3	100
Mount Lebanon, excluding suburbs	5.3	14.1	15.2	21.4	44.0	100
North Lebanon	14.9	14.9	10.6	21.3	38.3	100
South Lebanon	16.8	12.2	14.9	24.1	32.0	100
Nabatiyah	17.6	12.3	17.3	22.3	30.5	100
Beqaa	20.7	12.5	9.7	20.3	36.5	100
All Lebanon	9.3	15.1	11.6	23.2	40.8	100

Source: Study of household living conditions, Central Administration for Statistics, Beirut, 1998.

4. *Breakdown of workers by age and sex*: The rate of participation by women in has clearly improved, both in the economic sectors and in enterprises. The number of women workers is estimated at 21 per cent of the overall total of workers,

while the employment rate among women has risen to 25 per cent of total women of working age and to 36 per cent of the overall 18-35 age group. This indicates a steady growth in employment among young women. Table 5 below indicates that women are predominantly employed in the service industry. The public administration employs 9.4 per cent of men and 3.5 per cent of women, while the education sector employs 27.8 of women and 4.2 per cent of working men.

Table 5
Breakdown of the workforce by economic sector and sex in 1997 (per cent)

Sector/sex	*Agriculture*	*Industry*	*Construction*	*Commerce*	*Services*	*Total*
Male	10.2	15.5	14.2	24.4	35.7	100
Female	5.7	13.3	0.9	18.3	61.8	100
Total	**9.3**	**15.1**	**11.9**	**23.3**	**40.8**	**100**

Source: Study of household living conditions, 1997, Central Administration for Statistics, p. 43.

The following table shows a breakdown of the percentages of workers in the various economic sectors in 2001.

Table 6
Breakdown of the workforce by economic sector and sex in 2001 (per cent)

Sector/sex	*Agriculture*	*Industry*	*Construction*	*Commerce*	*Services*	*Total*
Male	7.7	14.8	11.9	25.3	40.3	100
Female	3.5	11.5	0.5	18.9	55.6	100
Total	**6.7**	**14.1**	**9.4**	**23.9**	**45.8**	**100**

Source: Chohig Kasparian, L'entrée des jeunes libanais dans la vie active et l'émigration.

II. Women's employment

During recent years, in a milestone breakthrough, women have started to occupy positions in economic enterprises; they have taken administrative positions in larger enterprises at a rate of 17.1 per cent and in small enterprises at a rate of 8.3 per cent. The proportion of women in the education sector amounts to some 62 per cent.

1. The marginal sector. In the fields to which the employment laws and regulations do not apply, there are economically active persons working in enterprises that are not officially registered. There are no available data, however, to enable a clear and accurate breakdown of marginal activity by sector, region, sex and age, particularly since any measurement of this sector is difficult and essentially elastic. A number of women are employed in marginal sectors, including domestic service and unregistered micro-enterprises, and therefore have no access to the payments and benefits guaranteed under the Employment Act and the social security scheme.

The evidence from various estimates is that workers in marginal sector are, to some extent, equally divided between men and women. In the case of women, the marginal activities are concentrated in the cottage industries, agriculture and various services. There are relatively few women in the field of industry and the number of

women in construction is clearly even lower. There is a conspicuous amount of marginal activity in the different areas of the service industry.

2 *The industrial sector*: Women began to occupy a significant place in productive economic activity some time ago, as is apparent in the industrial sector; statistics produced in 1998 (Ministry of Industry) found that the proportion of female manual labour in industry amounted to 12.4 per cent. In the main, women are essentially employed in the food, clothing, textile, tobacco and chemical industries. The proportion of women in these latter sectors was approximately 70 per cent of total workers. According to the same statistics, the number of women employers stood at 1,100, or 3.1 per cent, of total employers and members of their family. This proportion remains low in comparison with the total proportion of the number of female workers in the industrial sector. Women work mainly in larger industrial units employing over 20 workers; the proportion of the female workforce stands at 22.5 per cent in units employing between 100 and 249 workers, whereas it falls to under 7 per cent in units employing between one and four workers. This underlines the importance of creating job opportunities for women through establishment of their own micro-enterprises, particularly among the lower categories of workers.

In 2000, the number of female workers in the industrial sector amounted to approximately 24,500, compared with 14,200 in 1998, representing an increase of 72 per cent. This difference is attributable to a number of reasons, in particular:

(a) The unlicensed industrial employment of various workers, particularly those not registered under social security, the highest proportion of whom are among women who receive social benefits through their husbands;

(b) The largely worsening economic conditions during the two years in question as a result of the higher burdens of living, particularly where education is concerned, and women's efforts to enter the job market;

(c) The activity of finance institutions in awarding loans to large numbers of women.

3 *The agricultural sector*: Statistics for 1999 show that the agricultural sector was already a relatively marginal sector in which older and uneducated people were employed. Consequently, it cannot now compete at the local, regional and international levels owing to neglect and the small proportion of loans granted to only 1 per cent of total owners of agricultural smallholdings. The performance of the agricultural sector has accordingly fallen in recent years, particularly after the external markets opened up, leading to a fall in the value of sales, despite the higher number of agricultural smallholders, of whom there were 194,829 in 1999, 7 per cent of them females.

Table 7

Breakdown of number of workers in the agricultural sector by group

Type of work	*Smallholders*	*Labourers and members of their families*	*Temporary labourers turned permanent*	*Total*
Number of labourers	187 444	22 753	83 593	293 790
Percentage of the total	63.81	7.74	28.45	100
Percentage of female labour	30	18	52	100

Source: Agricultural statistics in Lebanon during 1998, Ministry of Industry in conjunction with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2000.

The above table shows the high proportions of women workers in the agricultural sector, where no social benefits are received.

4. *The banking sector*: In 2003, the number of bank workers in Lebanon stood at 15,563, compared with 15,442 in 2002, or, a rise of 0.8 per cent against rises of 1 per cent in 2002, 0.6 per cent in 2001 and 0.3 per cent in 2000. Typically, the number of workers in the banking sector who have university degrees is increasing, as is the number of female workers.

Table 8
Growth in the number of workers in the Lebanese banking sector and breakdown by sex (2000 to 2003)

Year	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
Total number of employees	15,195	15,287	15,442	15,563
Annual percentage increase	0.3	0.6	1.0	0.8
Females (per cent of total)	41.4	42.1	42.7	42.8
Males (per cent of total)	58.6	57.9	57.3	57.2

Source: Association of Banks in Lebanon, Annual report.

A reading of the above tables clearly shows that the proportion of female workers rose from 41.4 per cent in 2000 to 42.8 per cent in 2003. This proportion largely exceeds that of the Lebanese female workforce, which stood at 22.3 per cent according to the findings of studies dating back to 2001.

5. *The education sector*: The total number of male teachers in the education sector rose between the academic years 1997/98 and 2003/04 from 74,923 to 87,908, or by 17.33 per cent over six years at a rate of 2.7 per cent annually, whereas the number of female teachers rose from 51,669 in 1997/98 to 62,747 in 2003/04, or by 21.44 per cent at a rate of approximately 3.3 per cent annually.

Table 9
Breakdown of teachers by sex between 1997 and 2003 (per cent)

Years/sex	*1997/98*	*1998/99*	*1999/2000*	*2000/01*	*2003/04*
Male	31	30.3	30.3	29.8	28.6
Female	69	69.7	69.7	70.2	71.4

Source: 1. Education indicators in Lebanon, Educational Centre for Research and Development in Lebanon, 2002.

2. Annual statistical bulletin of the Educational Centre for Research and Development in Lebanon, 2003/04.

6. *The liberal professions*: It is worth pointing out that, in general, the proportion of Lebanese women entering the liberal professions has been constantly increasing since these unions were established. As illustrated by the following table, substantial numbers of women are now moving in the direction of new

specializations which were previously male-dominated, such as engineering, medicine, accounting, contracting and so on, despite the apparent discrimination still affecting Lebanese women and other obstacles which compound the practical difficulties which they face, particularly in reconciling work with their family and reproductive roles.

Table 10

Breakdown of members of unions for the liberal professions by sex in 2002 (per cent)

Name of union	*Date founded*	*Percentage of males*	*Percentage of females*
Union of Lawyers	1919	75	25
Union of Doctors	1947	81.14	18.86
Union of Journalists	1948	70	30
Union of Dentists	1949	75.5	24.5
Union of Pharmacists	1950	43	57
Union of Engineers	1951	90	10
Union of Contractors	1965	99	1
Unions of Chartered Accountants	1995	92	8

Source: The above professional unions.

III. Finance institutions and their role in reducing poverty and unemployment rates, particularly among women

The private and public sectors suffer bank interest rates that are high in comparison with those paid on the world financial markets. In Lebanon, the bank interest rate is about 15 per cent on the dollar and about 18 per cent, or sometimes more, on the Lebanese pound. This has extremely unfortunate implications for the activity of small and micro-enterprises that may be run by women, bearing in mind that 20 per cent of women who are not employed elsewhere work in enterprises which belong to a husband or family member or which they themselves own. This percentage largely corresponds to the number of women who obtain loans from non-governmental finance institutions in order to set up or develop their own enterprises.

Non-governmental enterprises have begun to play a positive socio-economic role, particularly in regard to women's employment, by providing job opportunities for women who are out of work. They are now granting loans to small investors, some 64,500 individuals benefit from such loans. This figure is considered high in comparison with the number of individuals who lost their jobs in past years, which amounts to about 87,000.

These newly established finance institutions, however, still suffer from organizational problems which, in some cases, have led to their closure. They also suffer from failure to coordinate among themselves. In some of these institutions, those in charge are intent on raising loan interest, which can be as high as 40 per cent or so, with the aim of reducing risk and any collapse of the criteria under which loans are granted whereby those who have taken out loans are not obliged to pay the instalments due. The number of institutions operating in this field rose to 23 in 1998 and then fell back down to the current number of 13.

A number of women who run their own enterprises operate in the marginal sector. The women working in this sector have benefited from initiatives for support and assistance run by various local and international institutions, including Child Relief, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Social Movement. A review of some of these programmes shows that their main activities for women focused on the following areas: weaving, crafts, the food business, pottery and glasswork, simple medical businesses, office work and simple chemical and cosmetic businesses.

In this context, during the five years between 1997 and 2002, some 54,000 loans were provided on incentive terms and the proportion of women who benefited from such loans was estimated to account for 88.85 per cent of the total.

Chapter 7
Equality of health care

(Article 12 of the Convention)

I. Legal provisions in effect

1. *The right to health.* Lebanese law does not discriminate between men and women in regard to the right to health and health care.

2. *Family planning.* Under Lebanese law, women are entitled to use family planning methods and birth control without the permission of their husbands. Article 32 of Legislative Decree No. 112 of 10 November 1983 abolished the provisions under which any person engaged in prescribing, advertising, selling or facilitating the use of any contraceptive item was punished with imprisonment.

3. *Reproductive health.* Under Lebanese law (Legislative Decree No. 78 of 9 September 1983, as amended), any person intending to marry is required to undergo medical, laboratory and preventive tests with a view to promotion of the couple's reproductive health. Moreover, under article 484 of the Penal Code, a religious official is punished with a fine if he conducts a marriage before the announcements and all other procedures stipulated by law in that regard are complete.

4. *Abortion.* There has been no change in the previous situation in regard to abortion. Lebanese law prohibits abortion under articles 209 and 539 of the Penal Code. It also prohibits the sale of items intended for abortion and facilitation of the use of such items (article 540 of the Penal Code). Women who cause their own miscarriage by means which they themselves administer or which are administered by a third party with their consent are punished with imprisonment of six months to three years (article 541 of the Penal Code). Women have the benefit of mitigating circumstances when the pregnancy is the result of an illicit relationship such as adultery or incest (article 545 of the Penal Code). No mitigating circumstances, however, apply to the woman's partner (article 216 of the Penal Code).

Under the law, deliberate abortion performed without the woman's consent is deemed to be an offence, as is abortion performed with or without the woman's consent that leads to her death.

Lebanese law permits medical abortion under specific circumstances set forth in the Medical Conduct Act No. 288 of 22 February 1994.

II. Recent legal developments

Legal developments have occurred in the following areas:

1. Social security: On 1 February 2002, a decree implementing Act No. 248 of 9 August 2000 was promulgated, bringing into effect the section on voluntary insurance for illness and maternity (as from 1 March 2003). Pursuant to this decree, various uninsured groups were given the opportunity to join the National Social Security Fund in return for regular payment of a contribution. These groups are:

- Persons acting on behalf of or performing services on account of their spouses, ascendants or immediate descendants;
- Persons who were formerly insured for illness and maternity and who no longer fulfil the compulsory conditions for such insurance;
- Independent non-agricultural and unwaged workers who are self-employed;
- Employers using waged workers who are registered with the Fund.

It should be pointed out that the insured person and family dependents receive voluntary health insurance benefits.

2. Reproductive health: On 22 March 2003, Decree No. 9814 was promulgated, bringing in the adoption of a project to finalize the incorporation of reproductive health services into the primary health care system, with focus on providing wider access to family planning services, increasing the number of medically supervised deliveries, reducing complications relating to childbirth and abortion and increasing the proportion of those who benefit from counselling services. This project is part of the national reproductive health programme which was launched by Lebanon on the recommendation of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994.

3. The health of working women: On 30 January 2004, Decree No. 11802 was promulgated, thereby amending Decree 6341 of 1950 with the introduction of a requirement for all workers in institutions subject to the provisions of the Employment Act, in particular pregnant women and mothers of infants under two years of age, to undergo a periodic medical examination during their term of employment. The new Decree also prohibits the employment of women confirmed to be pregnant and nursing mothers in jobs involving exposure to gasoline or products containing gasoline.

As for maternity leave, reference has already been made in this report to the amendment, introduced in 2000, whereby the period of maternity leave for waged employees subject to the Employment Act is now seven weeks instead of 40 days.

4. Disability: On 23 May 2003, the Rights of Disabled Persons Act was promulgated. In addition to providing a disabled-person card and reconstituting the National Committee for Disabled Persons, it affirms the right of disabled persons to obtain health, rehabilitation and support services, as well as their right to a suitable environment for education and sport, to work and employment, to social benefits and to mobility, along with parking places, market licences and housing permits. It further contains miscellaneous tax provisions.

III. Main areas of discrimination against women

1 The right to health: In 2000, total spending on health amounted to 12.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), a percentage which is relatively high compared with that in other countries. On the other hand, the proportion of Lebanese in receipt of various health benefit payments is no higher than 46 per cent, thus prejudicing the universal right to health. In 1999, the proportion of women who benefited from coverage stood at 47 per cent, compared with 45 per cent for men.

The rate of health coverage varies according to economic status; it is no higher than 24 per cent among limited income groups and as high as 75 per cent among more affluent groups. Over one third of families are uninsured, mainly for reasons relating to the economic situation. The burden of costs for medical treatment is reduced whenever the income level rises; studies have shown that, in 1997, spending on health amounted to 8.6 per cent of total annual household costs, a percentage which varies according to income group (14.1 per cent among the low-income group, compared with 6.6 per cent among the high-income group).

Of the female groups deprived of health coverage, the over-60 age group is the most seriously affected; in 1997, the proportion amounted to 37.4 per cent, even though females suffer more chronic illness than do males (38.2 per cent compared with 32.2 per cent, respectively).

There is regional inequality in the rate of women's health coverage. In 1999, this rate stood at 53.1 per cent in Beirut (the highest) and 36.4 per cent in the Bekaa (the lowest). The table below provides a detailed breakdown of persons benefiting from health insurance by sex and place of residence.

Table 1
Breakdown of those benefiting from health insurance by sex and place of residence (weighted per cent)

	Females				*Males*			
Place of residence	*Insured*	*Uninsured*	*Incomplete health form*	*Total*	*Insured*	*Uninsured*	*Incomplete health form*	*Total*
Beirut	55.0	43.8	1.2	100	51.0	47.0	2.0	100
Beirut suburbs	50.0	48.8	1.3	100	48.0	48.8	3.2	100
Mount Lebanon, excluding suburbs	52.2	46.9	0.9	100	51.0	46.0	3.0	100
North Lebanon	41.7	57.5	0.7	100	39.9	57.0	3.1	100
South Lebanon	52.7	46.5	0.8	100	50.0	45.6	4.4	100
Nabatiyah	37.3	62.3	0.3	100	37.1	60.2	2.7	100
Bekaa	36.5	63.4	0.1	100	36.3	62.6	1.1	100
Total	**46.9**	**52.3**	**0.8**	**100**	**44.9**	**52.2**	**2.8**	**100**

Source: Ministry of Health, National study on household spending and consumption of health services in 1999, volume 2, October 2001, Beirut.

Insurance for dentistry and mental health problems remains limited and subject to conditions. Such insurance covers remuneration for specialist doctors working in or within the confines of either field (laboratories in the first case and psychological therapists, speech therapists and physical therapists in the second case).

It can therefore be said that, despite the efforts of the State, the health sector suffers from the high cost of health services and disparity in the quantity and quality of such services, in addition to which treatment prevails over prevention. Women are as affected as men by this situation, particularly if they are in difficult economic circumstances, live in remote areas away from the capital or are over 60 years of age.

2. *Abortion*: The provisions relating to abortion have not been amended. It therefore continues to be performed in secret, placing at risk the physical and mental health of women undergoing the procedure.

Furthermore, in regard to abortion where the pregnancy is due to rape, the Lebanese legislator has simply allowed the woman concerned to plead mitigating circumstances, whereas greater consideration to her situation is merited; she should be exonerated instead of being allowed to plead mitigating circumstances.

3. *Disability*: The Rights of Disabled Persons Act makes no distinction between women and men. No attention is devoted, however, to the particular needs of disabled women in terms of reproductive health and access to services, nor is any consideration given to the status of disabled women, who remain affected by their environment and the attitude of society towards them. Disabled women experience secondary discrimination between them and disabled men.

4. *Environment*: It is essential to make some reference the subject of environment, which has a direct impact on health. While everyone suffers from the problems caused by pollution of the environment, pregnant women must be singled out for mention. Lebanon has a tremendous number of environmental problems, including, but not limited to, air pollution, drinking-water contamination, sanitation, solid waste, industrial waste, disposal and treatment of hospital waste and depletion of natural resources.

5. *Reproductive health*: For biological, social and cultural reasons, women are more vulnerable than men to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), particularly AIDS.

IV. Developments in women's health

1. *The right to health*: Women currently receive all health benefit payments if they belong to the National Social Security Fund or have private health insurance. The statistics of the National Social Security Fund for 2003 indicate that the number of insured persons stands at 386,000, of whom 253,000 are male and 133,000 are female. This number does not include students and voluntary members. By October 2004, the number of insured persons had risen to 409,395, in addition to 24,741 voluntarily insured persons, bringing the total number of insured persons at 3 October 2004 to 437,438. The breakdown of insured persons is as follows below:

Table 2

Breakdown of members of the National Social Security Fund by sex and scheme from which they benefit

Scheme	*Public**	*Teachers*	*Mayors*	*Doctors*	*Students*	*Voluntary*	*Total*
Males	226,444	9,229	1,663	1,663	15,984	24,741	279,724
Females	99,758	31,177	16	792	22,669	3,302	157,714

Scheme	*Public**	*Teachers*	*Mayors*	*Doctors*	*Students*	*Voluntary*	*Total*
Total	326,202	40,406	1,679	2,455	38,653	28,143	437,538
Percentage of males	69.4	22.8	99.0	67.7	41.3	87.9	63.9
Percentage of females	30.7	77.1	0.9	32.2	59.6	12.1	36.1
Total (per cent)	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: Statistics of the National Social Security Fund to 23 October 2004.

* This scheme covers the following groups: Lebanese wage-earners, foreign wage-earners associated with a specific employer, drivers of public vehicles, sellers of newspapers and magazines, journalists, permanent agricultural wage-earners and government wage-earners.

The following two tables provide a breakdown of women belonging to the voluntary insurance scheme by age and category of membership of the National Social Security Fund.

Table 3
Breakdown of voluntarily insured females by age

Age	*Number*	*Percentage*
Under 30	71	2.1
Between 30 and 39	312	9.4
Between 40 and 49	575	17.4
Between 50 and 53	1,013	40.3
Over 64	1,331	40.3
Total	**3,302**	**100**

Source: Statistics of the National Social Security Fund to 20 October 2004.

Table 4
Breakdown of female members of the voluntary insurance scheme by category of membership

Categories having right of membership	*Number*	*Percentage*
Female voluntary members acting on behalf of or performing services on account of their husbands, ascendants or immediate descendants	25	0.7
Female voluntary members formerly belonging to the National Social Security Fund	955	28.9
Female voluntary members in the self-employed category of non-agricultural and unwaged workers	2,280	69.1
Female voluntary members in the category of employers using waged workers of various categories and in various activities	42	1.3
Total	**3,302**	**100**

Source: Statistics of the National Social Security Fund to 20 October 2004.

In addition, through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs, in conjunction with the non-governmental health sector, the State provides health care for uninsured citizens, in particular social groups with limited income.

Such health services include medical examinations, courses of treatment, medicine supplies and laboratory tests. It is worth mentioning that the Ministry of Health has a centre which supplies medicines for incurable illnesses; together with the World Health Organization (WHO), it is in charge of distributing medicines to all Lebanese for the treatment of cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, mental illness and epilepsy, as well as for organ transplant and haemophilia. It goes without saying that there is no discrimination between men and women when it comes to benefiting from this service.

The non-governmental sector forms a key back-up to the State in terms of ensuring primary health services; recent studies indicate that, in 2001, 80 per cent of the 787 clinics and health centres in Lebanon were run by non-governmental organizations. It is worth stating that these centres now devote more attention to women's health in the form of programmes for awareness-raising, education and prevention, in addition to maternal and child health services.

2. *Disability*. The number of disabled persons in Lebanon is estimated at about 2 per cent of the total population. According to a report produced by the Ministry of Social Affairs, 46,610 disabled-person cards had been issued by 31 December 2003, covering all regions of Lebanon and all types of disability, without distinction, as illustrated by the figures below.

Table 5

Breakdown of disabled-person cards issued by the competent Ministry by region and sex (per cent)

Region (by residential address)	
Bekaa	13.85
South	13.95
North	18.29
Nabatiyah	9.39
Beirut	8.22
Mount Lebanon	36.29
Total in Lebanon	**100**
Sex	
Females	36.87
Males	63.13
Total in Lebanon	**100**

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs, Immediate outcome of the programme to ensure the rights of disabled persons, 1994-2003.

The same report also states that 1,960,963 pieces of auxiliary service equipment (wheelchairs, medical footwear, special chairs, beds, tables, etc.) had been received by 9,869 disabled persons, in accordance with the following table:

Table 6
Breakdown of disabled persons benefiting from auxiliary services by region and sex (per cent)

Region (by residential address)	
Bekaa	12.96
South	16.43
North	16.03
Nabatiyah	8.96
Beirut	8.54
Mount Lebanon	37.07
Lebanon total	**100**

Sex	
Females	41.73
Males	58.27
Lebanon total	**100**

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs, Immediate outcome of the programme to ensure the rights of disabled persons, 1994-2003

Despite the efforts made, however, the situation of disabled persons is still less than required to ensure their rights as ordinary citizens.

3. *Reproductive health*. In 2001, Lebanon officially undertook a national population policy that included reproductive health and family planning. The development in the maternal and child health indicators points to an improvement in recent years in the reproductive health situation as a result of the action taken by the State in conjunction with the non-governmental sector, together with the support of international organizations; a growing awareness of reproductive health has been noted, in addition to a positive change in health behaviour in general and among women in particular and an improvement in health services.

Reproductive health is known to be related to various issues such as family planning, proper sexual development and the prevention of STDs.

Recent studies have confirmed that, in comparison with 1994, the infant death rate in 2000 fell to 27 per 1,000 (24 per 1,000 among females and 30 per 1,000 among males). In 2000, the proportion of children immunized against poliomyelitis, measles, mumps and rubella also rose to 77.8 per cent among children aged between 13 and 23 months (74.3 per cent for males and 81.3 per cent for females). Regional differences persisted, however, at 91.5 per cent, the highest proportion was in Mount Lebanon, compared with 56 per cent in Baalbek, Harmal, Akkar and Diniyah. It was noted that infant and child deaths fell in line with the higher educational level of mothers.

Studies also estimated that, in 1999, the maternal death rate from pregnancy and childbirth stood at about 104 per 100,000. This rate is known to be affected by the antenatal, perinatal and post-natal health care received by the mother.

In regard to antenatal care, studies showed that in the same year of 1999, 87 per cent of mothers presented for at least one medical check-up during the antenatal

period. In 50 per cent of cases, the examination was part of an ordinary visit. It should be noted that this rate recently rose to reach 94.9 per cent in 2000.

It is worth mentioning that, in 1999, the proportion who consulted a doctor for general preventive care stood at 5.5 per cent, with a clear rise in the number of women consulting a gynaecologist, showing an increase in awareness and in the right attitude towards certain aspects of reproductive health.

As for perinatal health care, the proportion of women whose children were delivered by a doctor and legal midwives in 2000 stood at 96 per cent. In some remote areas, women still use traditional midwives. In Akkar, for example, the proportion stood at 9 per cent, although it has diminished in recent years. Good prenatal care is known to reduce the risk of stillbirth.

The level of post-natal care is still less than desirable; in 1996, only 39 per cent of mother received such care, a factor which is related to educational level (58 per cent for university-educated women and 23 per cent for illiterate women). The proportions also varied according to area (at 66 per cent, the highest was in Beirut and the lowest, at 30 per cent, was in the governorate of South Lebanon).

As for family planning, studies show that 99 per cent of women in 2000 were aware of at least one method of family planning and that 40.5 per cent used new contraceptive methods, while 22 per cent stayed with traditional contraceptive methods. The coil is the method most widely used (17.7 per cent), followed by the contraceptive pill (15 per cent) and condoms (4.4 per cent). Women receive free family planning services in the centres operating under the reproductive health programme throughout all areas of Lebanon.

In this context, the effective and active role played by non-governmental associations and bodies in the field of reproductive health must be applauded, notably in regard to the dissemination of information, health education, care, access to services and the updating of laws. Particular mention should be made of the Family Planning Association, which was founded in 1969 and is still active to this day.

V. National health programmes supported by the United Nations

As mentioned earlier, the subject of health care receives attention in a number of national programmes, primarily the following:

1. *The national reproductive health programme:* In 1997, the national reproductive health programme was launched by the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs, with support from international organizations. The programme sought to elaborate a national strategy for reproductive health, in conjunction with various non-governmental associations, with the aim of improving access to reproductive health services and information so as to further the use of family planning methods, reduce complications relating to delivery and unsafe abortion and increase the proportion of men and women who receive counselling in connection with STDs and HIV/AIDS.

This programme comprises a number of activities, including the equipment of 430 health centres for the provision of reproductive health services as part of primary health care. The Ministry of Social Affairs also had the task of implementing a reproductive health project to inform, communicate and educate, in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), through which

various publications, leaflets and audio-visual methods of education were produced. It carried out assessment studies, trained health workers and conducted awareness-raising campaigns in numerous areas of Lebanon. Some universities assisted in preparing the educational materials, the effect of which was tremendously positive.

The services continue to require further support, despite the efforts made. In reproductive health, for instance, greater efforts are still needed in the area of post-natal care, in addition to which a number of young men and women are still vulnerable to unprotected sex, the problems of unplanned pregnancy and abortion. The health problems of older women also require more attention.

2. *The national AIDS/STD control programme*. The national AIDS/STD control programme was launched in 1984 as a joint programme between the Ministry of Health and WHO, with the aim of limiting the spread of the AIDS epidemic by disseminating information, providing more health education, offering support and care to those living with AIDS, as well as to their families, and monitoring development of the disease. This programme also plays a part in controlling STDs. Data from the programme show that, at 1 October 2004, there were 808 cases of the disease. The following table gives a breakdown of those cases by age, sex and means of transmission.

Table 8
Breakdown of AIDS carriers by means of transmission, age group, sex and relationship with travel (per cent)

Cumulative number of AIDS carriers	*772 responses*
Breakdown by means of transmission	
Sexual relations	78.6
- Heterosexual (man and woman)	53.0
- Homosexual (man and man)	9.0
- Bisexual (heterosexual and homosexual)	5.6
- Unspecified	31.3
Contaminated blood	6.4
Intravenous injection of drugs	5.6
Mother-to-infant	2.6
Unspecified	6.8
Age group	
31-50 years	58.8
Breakdown by sex	
Men	81.3
Women	18.2
Unspecified	0.5
Breakdown by relationship with travel	
Unrelated to travel	56.8
Related to travel	43.2

Source: National AIDS control programme in Lebanon to 1 October 2004.

Officials estimate that the declared number of those living with AIDS is below the actual number. It is therefore vital to strengthen preventive measures and change some of the erroneous ideas which young people have about AIDS on the one hand and to ensure permanent treatment for people living with AIDS on the other hand.

On 11 July 1990, Decree No. 150/1 was promulgated, classifying AIDS/HIV as a notifiable communicable disease. Since that date, the official view is that the rate of notification, which had been practically non-existent, has naturally improved.

An intermediate action plan was drafted by the national AIDS control programme between 1995 and 2000, during which awareness-raising campaigns were launched in various areas of Lebanon and auxiliary teaching materials and protocols were prepared with the help of university and non-governmental bodies. An action plan was also drafted for the period 2004-2009, focusing essentially on securing the rights of people living with AIDS and on prevention, care and follow-up. The programme also focused its 2005 campaign on women under the title of "I am a mother, sister, daughter, worker and wife ... It is my right to protect myself and it is your duty to help me."

At this juncture, it is essential to mention the effective roles played by non-governmental associations in promoting the programmes and plans and translating them into reality. As stated in the most recent bulletin of the national AIDS control programme, special applause is due to the Health Care Society, the Family Planning Association, Youth against Drugs, the Sidon Gathering of Non-Governmental Associations and the Armenian Relief Cross.

3. *The national programme for non-communicable diseases*. Launched in 1997, this is a joint programme between the Ministry of Public Health and WHO aimed at improving information on chronic diseases, disseminating knowledge, increasing means of prevention and altering behaviour and practices. In the context of this programme, national awareness-raising campaigns were organized during recent years on a variety of subjects, such as prevention of obesity, coronary embolism, blood clots in the brain, heart and arteries, osteoporosis and so on.

A remarkable effort in matters of concern to women has recently been noted; for the second consecutive year, WHO, as part of a joint annual programme with the Ministry of Health, organized a national campaign for the prevention of breast and cervical cancer throughout the month of October 2003. The campaign included awareness-raising and educational activities, in addition to which it facilitated low-cost testing and chest X-rays at treatment clinics throughout Lebanon.

The proportion of women suffering from cancer in Lebanon is known to be high; according to the report of the National Cancer Register, of the women who accounted for 57.4 per cent of all cancer cases in 2002, 49.7 per cent had breast cancer.

Here also, there is cooperation with various non-governmental and academic associations.

4. *The medication programme for chronic patients*. Launched in 1988, this programme falls under the Ministry of Health and is implemented largely in cooperation with the Christian Youth Association, supplying chronic-disease medicines through the health centres belonging to the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs, non-governmental associations and various social institutions. In

2000, the number of these centres in which 120,539 chronic patients received medication amounted to 408. According to the Association's report for the first half of 2004, the number of centres had risen to 413, serving 1,026 villages and towns, and 88,912 chronic patients benefited from the programme on an ongoing basis, 58 per cent of them women. The Christian Youth Association plays an effective role in this programme.

VI. Health workers

Statistics indicate that Lebanon has a surplus of doctors and a shortage of nurses, both male and female. In 2002, the number of doctors registered in the Union was estimated at 230 per 100,000 inhabitants. Of these, 70 per cent were specialists. Doctors are unequally distributed among the governorates; in Beirut, the number of doctors is high, averaging 619 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants, whereas in Nabatiyah it falls to 98 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants.

On the other hand, the number of nurses registered in the Union by May 2004 stood at 4,022. It is estimated that there is one nurse to every 1,600 inhabitants. This rate is among the lowest in the world.

The number of dentists belonging to Lebanon's two dental unions was estimated at 3,730 in 2001. Their regional distribution, however, is uneven. In 2002, the number of pharmacists belonging to the Union of Pharmacists was estimated at 3,512, some 58 per cent of whom worked in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Women represent the majority in the health professions; in 2001, females accounted for 70.9 per cent of total workers in the middle health professions.

VII. Challenges and limitations to the realization of women's right to health

Despite the remarkable efforts in the field of health services made by the State in conjunction with the private sector and with the support of international organizations, the handed-down customs and traditions which reinforce discriminatory attitudes against women stand in the way of the endeavour for equality in health care. Intermarriage, for example, is still common in certain rural areas and the link between this and a high number of genetic disabilities is well known. Abortion, which is legally prohibited, is practised in secret. In addition, the delay of marriage to a later age for social and economic reasons has, as recent studies have indicated, begun to affect larger groups of young women. The proportion of single women has also increased in the past few years. These are all matters which have an adverse impact on women's physical and mental health.

Last but not least, wider health coverage is still required in order to include all Lebanese, as are practical measures to ensure that health programmes and projects serve all groups and all regions. The importance of modifying the recognized criteria for the success of such projects and programmes also needs to be taken into account.

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